GOOD NEWS FOR THE Vileſt of Men,

Or, A HELP for DESPAIRING SOULS.

BEING

A Diſcourſe upon *Luke* 24. 47. the latter part of the Verſe.

SHEWING

That *JESUS CHRIST* would have MERCY in the Firſt Place offered to the Biggeſt SINNER.

By *JOHN BUNYAN* of *Bedford.*

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TO THE
READER.

Courteous Reader,

ONe reaſon which moved me to Write and Print his Little Book, was, becauſe, though there are many Excellent Heart-affecting Diſcourſes in the World that tends to Convert the Sinner; yet I had a deſire to try this ſimple Method of mine:

Wherefore I make bold *thus* to Invite and Encourage the *Worst* to come to *Christ* for Life.

I have been Vile *my-self*, but have obtained Mercy, and I would have my Companions in Sin partake of Mercy too, and therefore I have *writ* this Little Book.

The Nation doth swarm with Vile Ones *now*, as ever it did since it was a Nation. My Little

Little Book in ſome places can ſcarce go from Houſe to Houſe, but 'twill find a ſuitable Subject to ſpend it ſelf upon. Now ſince *Chriſt Jeſus* is willing to ſave the Vileſt, why ſhould they not by Name be ſomewhat acquainted with it, and bid come to him under that Name?

A great Sinner, when Converted, ſeems a booty to *Jeſus Chriſt*; he gets by ſaving ſuch an

one; why then ſhould both *Jeſus* loſe his Glory, and the Sinner loſe his Soul at once, and that for want of an Invitation?

I have found through God's grace, good ſucceſs in Preaching upon this Subject, and *perhaps* ſo I may, by my writing upon it too. I have, as you ſee, let down this Net for a draught, the Lord catch ſome great Fiſhes by it, for the magnifying of his

Truth.

Truth. There are ſome moſt Vile in *all* Mens eyes, and ſome are ſo in their *own* eyes too; but ſome have their Paintings to ſhroud their vileneſs under, yet they are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do: And for all theſe, God hath ſent a Saviour *Jeſus*: and to all theſe the Door is opened.

Wherefore prethee, Profane Man, give this

little Book the reading. Come; Pardon, and a part in Heaven and Glory, cannot be hurtful to thee. Let not thy Luſts and Folly drive thee beyond the door of Mercy, ſince it is not lockt nor bolted up againſt thee. *Manaſſeh* was a bad *Man*, and *Magdalen* a bad *Woman*: To ſay nothing of the *Thief* upon the *Croſs*, or of the *murderers* of *Chriſt*; yet they obtained *mercy*; *Chriſt* willingly

lingly received them.

And doſt thou *think* that *thoſe* once ſo bad, now they are in *Heaven*, *repent* them there, *becauſe* they left their *ſins* for *Chriſt* when they were in the *world?* I cannot *believe* but that *thou thinkeſt* they have verily got the *beſt* on't. Why *Sinner*, do thou likewiſe: *Chriſt* at *Heaven* Gates, ſays to thee, *come hither*; and the *Devil* at *the gates* of *Hell* does call thee *to come to him. Simer*, what

ſayeſt

ſayeſt thou? Whether wilt thou go? Don't go into the *Fire*, there *thou* wilt be *burned!* Don't let *Jeſus* loſe his *longing*, ſince 'tis for *thy Salvation*; but *come to him and live.*

One word more and ſo I have done. *Sinner*, here *thou* doſt hear of *Love*, prethee don't *provoke* it, *by turning it into wantonneſs.* He that dies for *ſlighting Love*, ſinks *deepeſt into Hell*, and will *there* be *tormented* by the *remembrance* of that *evil*, more

more than by the *deepest cogitation* of all his *other sins.* Take *heed* therefore, do not make *Love* thy *Tormenter, Sinner.*

Farewell.

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ERRA-

ERRATA.

PAge 1. Line 1. for *Diſcourſe* read *Verſe*. pag. 79. l. 21. leave out *to*.

The *Reader* may poſſibly meet with ſome few Literal Faults, which he is deſired to Correct with his Pen.

GOOD

GOOD NEWS
For the Vileſt of Men.

OR,

A Help for Deſpairing Souls.

Luke xxiv. 47.

——*Beginning at Jeruſalem.*

THe whole Diſcourſe runs thus: *And that repentance and remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.*

The Words were ſpoken by Chriſt, after he roſe from the Dead, and they are *here* rehearſed after an Hiſtorical manner, but do contain in them a formal Commiſſion, with a ſpecial *Clauſe* therein. The Commiſſion is, as you ſee, for

the Preaching of the Goſpel, and is very diſtinctly incerted in the Holy Record by *Matthew* and *Mark*. *Go teach all Nations, &c. Go ye into all the World and preach the Goſpel unto every Creature*, *Matt.* 28. 19. *Mark* 16. 15. Only this *Clauſe* is in ſpecial mentioned by *Luke*, who ſaith, That as Chriſt would have the Doctrine of Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins preached in his Name among all Nations, ſo he would have the People of *Jeruſalem* to have the firſt proffer thereof. *Preach it*, ſaith Chriſt, *in all Nations: but begin at Jeruſalem.*

The Apoſtles then, though they had a Commiſſion ſo large as to give them Warrant to go and preach the Goſpel in all the World, yet by *this Clauſe* they were limitted, as to the beginning of their Miniſtry: They were to *begin* this Work at *Jeruſalem*. *Beginning at Jeruſalem.*

Before I proceed to an Obſervation upon the Words, I muſt (but briefly) touch upon two things: Namely,

1. Shew you what *Jeruſalem now* was.
2. Shew you what it was to preach the Goſpel to them.

For the firſt, *Jeruſalem* is to be conſidered of, either,

1. With

1. With reſpect to the deſcent of her People: Or,

2. With reſpect to her Preference and Exaltation: Or,

3. With reſpect to her preſent State, as to her Decays.

Firſt, As to her *deſcent*: She was from *Abraham*, the Sons of *Jacob*, a People that God ſingled out from the reſt of the Nations to ſet his love upon them.

Secondly, As to her *Preference*, or Exaltation, ſhe was the place of Gods Worſhip, and *that* which had in, and with her, the ſpecial Tokens and Signs of Gods favour and preſence, above any other People in the World. Hence the Tribes went up to *Jeruſalem* to Worſhip, there was Gods houſe, Gods high Prieſt, Gods Sacrifices accepted, and Gods Eye, and Gods Heart perpetually, *Pſal.*76.1,2. *Pſal.*122. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. 1 *King.*9.3. But

Thirdly, We are to conſider *Jeruſalem* alſo in her Decays, for as ſhe is ſo conſidered, ſhe is the proper object of our Text, as will be further ſhewed by and by.

Jeruſalem, as I told you, was the place and ſeat of Gods Worſhip, but *now* decayed, degenerated, and apoſtatized.

The Word, the Rule of Worſhip, was rejected of them, and in its place they had put and ſet up their own Traditions. They had rejected alſo the moſt weighty Ordinances, and put in the room thereof their own little things, (*Matt.* 15. *Mark* 7.) *Jeruſalem* was therefore now greatly backſlidden, and become the place where Truth and true Religion was much defaced.

It was alſo now become the very ſink of Sin, and ſeat of Hypocriſie, and gulf where true Religion was *drowned*. Here alſo now reigned Preſumption, and groundleſs Confidence in God, which is the bane of Souls. Amongſt its Rulers, Doctors, and Leaders, Envy, Malice, and Blaſphemy vented it ſelf againſt the Power of Godlineſs, in all places where it was eſpied: As alſo againſt the Promoters of it; yea, their Lord and Maker could not eſcape them.

In a Word, *Jeruſalem* was now become the Shambles, the very Slaughter-ſhop for Saints. This was the place wherein the Prophets, Chriſt, and his People, were moſt horribly perſecuted and murdered. Yea, ſo hardened at *this* time was this *Jeruſalem* in her Sins, that She feared not to commit the biggeſt, and

and to bind her self by Wish under the guilt and damning evil of it; Saying, when he had murdered the Son of God, *His Blood be upon us and our Children.*

And though *Jesus Christ* did both by Doctrine, Miracles, and Holiness of life, seek to put a stop to their Villanies; yet they shut their eyes, stopt their ears, and rested not, till as was hinted before, they had driven him out of the World. Yea, that they might, if possible, have extinguished his Name, and exploded his Doctrine out of the World, they against all argument, and in despite of Heaven, its mighty hand, and undeniable proof of his Resurrection, did hire Souldiers to invent a lye, saying, *His Disciples stole him away from the Grave*; on purpose that men might not count him the Saviour of the World, nor trust in him for Remission of Sins.

They were, saith *Paul*, contrary to all men: For they did not only shut up the door of Life against themselves, but forbad that it should be opened to any else. *Forbidding us*, saith he, *to preach to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sin alway, Matt.* 23.35. *chap.* 15.7,8,9. *Mar.*7.6,7,8 *Matt.*3.7,8,9. *Joh.*8.33,41. *Matt.*27.18. *Mar.*3.30. *Luk.*2.65. *Matt.*23.

37. *Luk.* 13.33,34. *Pſal.* 2. 22, 23. *chap.* 4.10. *Matt.* 27.25. *chap.* 20. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. 1 *Theſſ.* 2.14,15,16.

This is the City, and *theſe* are the *People:* This is their *Character*, and *theſe* are their *Sins*. Nor can there be produced their parallel in all *this* World. Nay, *what* World! *what* People! *what* Nation, for Sin, and Tranſgreſſion, *could*, or *can* be compared to *Jeruſalem?* Eſpecially if you join to the matter of fact, the Light they ſinned againſt, and the Patience which they abuſed. Infinite was the Wickedneſs upon this account which they committed.

After all their abuſings of Wiſe Men, and Prophets, God ſent unto them *John Baptiſt*, to reduce them, and then his Son to redeem them; but they would be neither reduced nor redeemed, but perſecuted both to the Death. Nor did they, as I ſaid, ſtop here, the Holy Apoſtles they afterwards perſecuted alſo to death, even ſo many as they could, the reſt they drove from them unto the utmoſt Corners.

Secondly, I come now to ſhew you what it was to preach the Goſpel to them. It was, ſaith *Luke*, to preach to them *Repentance and remiſſion of Sins in Chriſts*

Christs Name. Or as *Mark* has it, *to and them repent and believe the Gospel,* *Mar.* 1. 15. Not that Repentance is a cause of Remission, but a sign of our hearty reception thereof. Repentance is therefore here put to intimate, that no pretended Faith of the Gospel is good, that is not accompanied with it. And this he doth on purpose cause he would not have them deceive themselves: For with what Faith can he expect remission of Sins in the Name of Christ, that is not heartily sorry for them? Or how shall a man be able to give to others a satisfactory account of his unfeigned subjection to the Gospel, that yet abides in his impenitency?

Wherefore Repentance is here joined with Faith in the way of receiving the Gospel. *Faith* is that without which it cannot be received *at all:* And *Repentance* that without which it cannot be received *unfeignedly*. When therefore Christ says, he would have Repentance and Remission of Sins preached in his Name among all Nations; it is as much as to say, *I will that all men every where be sorry for their sins, and accept of mercy at Gods hand thorow me, lest they fall under his wrath in the Judgement.* For as

I ſaid, without Repentance, what pretence ſoever men have of Faith, they cannot eſcape the wrath to come. Wherefore *Paul* ſaith, *God commands all men every where to repent* (in order to their Salvation.) *becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will Judge the World in Righteouſneſs by that man whom he hath ordained*, *Acts* 17. 30.

And now to come to this *Clauſe*, *Beginning at Jeruſalem*: That is, that Chriſt would have *Jeruſalem* have the firſt offer of the Goſpel.

1. This cannot be ſo commanded, becauſe they had now any more right of themſelves thereto than had any of the Nations of the World; for their Sins had diveſted them of all ſelf-deſervings.

2. Nor yet, becauſe they ſtood upon the *advance-ground* with the worſt of the Sinners of the Nations. Nay, rather the Sinners of the Nations had the *advance-ground* of them. For *Jeruſalem* was long, before ſhe had added this Iniquity to her ſin, worſe then the very Nations that God caſt out before the Children of *Iſrael*, 2 *Chron.* 33.

3. It muſt therefore follow that this *Clauſe*, *Begin at Jeruſalem*, was put into this

his Commission of meer Grace and Compassion; Even from the *over-flowings* of the bowels of Mercy. For indeed they were the worst, and so in the most deplorable condition of any People under the Heavens.

Whatever therefore their relation was to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, or *Jacob*, however they formerly had been the People among whom God had placed his *Name*, and *Worship*; they were *now* degenerated from God, more than the Nations were from their Idols, and were become guilty of the highest Sins which the People of the World were capable of committing. Nay, none can be capable of committing of such *pardonable* sins as they committed against their God, when they slew his Son, and persecuted his Name and Word.

From these words therefore, thus explained, we gain this Observation;

That Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest Sinners.

That these *Jerusalem*-Sinners were the biggest sinners that ever were in the world, I think none will deny, that believes that Christ was the best Man that ever was in the world, and also was their

Lord God. And that they were to have the first *offer of his grace*, the Text is as clear as the Sun, for it saith, *Begin at Jerusalem. Preach*, saith he, *Repentance and remission of sins to the* Jerusalem-*sinners*; to the *Jerusalem-sinners* in the *first place.*

One would a-thought, since the *Jerusalem-sinners* were the worst, and greatest Sinners, Christ's greatest enemies, and those that not only despised his Person, Doctrine, and Miracles, but that a little before had had their hands up to the elbows in his Heart-blood, That he should rather have said, Go into all the World and preach Repentance and remission of sins among all Nations; and after that, offer the same to *Jerusalem*. Yea, it had been infinite grace, if he had said so. But what grace is this? or what Name shall we give it, when he commands that this repentance and remission of sins, which is designed to be preached in all Nations, should first be offered to *Jerusalem*, in the first place to the worst of sinners?

Nor was this the first time that the grace which was in the heart of Christ, *thus* shewed it self to the World. For while he was *yet alive*, even while he was yet *in Jerusalem*, and perceived even among

mong theſe *Jeruſalem-ſinners*, which was he moſt vile amongſt them; he ſtill in his preaching did ſignifie that he had a deſire that the worſt of *theſe* worſt ſhould in the *firſt place* come unto him. The which he ſheweth where he ſaith to the better ſort of them, *The Publicans and Harlots enter into the Kingdom of God before you*, Matt. 21.31. Alſo when he compared *Jeruſalem* with the Sinners of the Nations, then he commands that the *Jeruſalem-ſinners* ſhould have the Goſpel at preſent confined to them. *Go not*, ſaith he, *into the way of the Gentiles, and into any of the Cities of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael*, Matt. 10.5,6. *chap.* 23.37. But go *rather* to them, for they were in the moſt fearful *plight*.

Theſe therefore muſt have the *Cream* of the Goſpel, namely, the firſt *offer* thereof in his Life-time: Yea, when he departed out of the World, he left this as part of his laſt Will with his Preachers, that they alſo ſhould offer it *firſt* to *Jeruſalem*. He had a mind, a careful mind, as it ſeems, to priviledge the worſt of Sinners with the firſt offer of Mercy, and to take from among *them* a People to be the firſt fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

The

The fifteenth of *Luke* alſo is famous for this, where the Lord Jeſus takes more care, as appears there by three Parables, for the loſt Sheep, loſt Groat, and the Prodigal Son, then for the other Sheep, the other Pence, or for the Son that ſaid he had never tranſgreſſed. Yea, he ſhews that there is Joy in Heaven, among the Angels of God, at the repentance of one Sinner, more than over Ninety and nine Juſt Perſons, which need no repentance, *Luk.* 15.

After this manner therefore the mind of Chriſt was ſet on the Salvation of the biggeſt Sinners in his Life-time. But joyn to this, *this* Clauſe, which he carefully put into the Apoſtles Commiſſion to preach, when he departed hence to the Father; and then you ſhall ſee that his Heart was vehemently ſet upon it, for theſe were part of his laſt words with them, *Preach my Goſpel to all Nations, but ſee that you begin at Jeruſalem.*

Nor did the Apoſtles over-look *this* Clauſe, when their Lord was gone into Heaven: They went *firſt* to them of *Jeruſalem*, and preached Chriſt's Goſpel to them. They abode alſo there for a ſeaſon and time, and preached it to no body

body else, for they had regard to the Commandment of their Lord.

And it is to be observed, namely, that the first Sermon which they preached after the Ascension of Christ, it was preached to the very worst of these *Jerusalem-sinners*; even to those that were the murderers of *Jesus Christ*, Acts 2. 23. For these are part of the Sermon: *Ye took him, and by wicked hands have Crucified and slain him.* Yea, the next Sermon, and the next, and also the next to that, was preached to the self-same murderers, to the end they might be saved, *Acts* 3. 14, 15, 16. *chap.* 4, 10, 11. *chap.* 5, 30. *chap.* 7. 52.

But we will return to the first Sermon that was preached to these *Jerusalem-sinners*, by which will be manifest more than great Grace, if it be duly considered.

For after that *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, had in their Exhortation perswaded these Wretches to believe that they had killed the Prince of Life, and after they had duly fallen under the guilt of their Murder, saying, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* He replies by an universal Tender to them all in general, considering them as *Christ*-killers. *That if*

they

they were ſorry for what they had done, and would be Baptized for the Remiſſion of their ſins in his Name, they ſhould receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, Acts 2. 37, 38.

This he ſaid to them all, though he knew that they were ſuch ſinners. Yea, he ſaid it without the leaſt ſtick, or ſtop, or pauſe of Spirit, as to whether he had beſt to ſay ſo or no. Nay, ſo far off was *Peter* from making an Objection againſt one of them, that by a particular Clauſe in his Exhortation, he endeavours, that not one of them may eſcape the Salvation offered. *Repent*, ſaith he, *and be Baptized every one of you.* I ſhut out *never a one of you.* For I am commanded by my Lord, to deal with you, as it were, one by one, by the Word of his Salvation. But why ſpeaks he ſo particularly? Oh! there were reaſons for it. The People with whom the Apoſtles were now to deal, as they were Murderers of our Lord, and to be charged in the general with his Blood, ſo they had their various and particular acts of Villany in the guilt thereof, now lying upon their Conſciences. And the guilt of theſe their various and particular acts of wickedneſs, could not perhaps, be reached to a removal thereof, but by this particular

Appli-

Application. Repent *every one of you*; be Baptized *every one of you*, in his Name, for the remiſſion of Sins, and you ſhall, *every one of you*, receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt.

Object. *But I was one of them that plotted to take away his Life. May I be ſaved by him?*

Peter. Every one of you.

Object. *But I was one of them that bare falſe Witneſs againſt him. Is there Grace for me!*

Peter. For every one of you.

Object. *But I was one of them that cryed out, Crucifie, Crucifie him; and that deſired that* Barabas *the Murderer might live rather than him. What will become of me, think you?*

Peter. I am to preach Repentance and remiſſion of Sins to *every one of you*, ſays *Peter.*

Object. *But I was one of them that did ſpit in his face when he ſtood before his Accuſers. I alſo was one that mocked him, when in anguiſh he hanged bleeding on the tree. Is there room for me?*

Peter. For every one of you, ſays *Peter.*

Object. *But I was one of them that in his extremity ſaid, Give him Gall and Vinegar*

to

to drink, why may not I expect the same when anguish and guilt is upon me?

Peter. Repent of these your wickednesses, and here is remission of sins *for every one of you.*

Object. *But I railed on him, I reviled him, I hated him, I rejoyced to see him mocked at by others. Can there be hopes for me?*

Peter. There is for every one of you. *Repent and be Baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* Oh! what a blessed *every one of you,* is here! How willing was *Peter* and the Lord *Jesus,* by his Ministry, to catch these Murderers with the Word of the Gospel, that they might be made *monuments* of the grace of God! How unwilling, I say, was he, that any of these should escape the hand of Mercy! Yea, what an amazing wonder is it, to think, that above all the world, and above every body in it, *These* should have the first offer of Mercy! *Beginning at Jerusalem.*

But was there not something of moment in *this Clause* of the Commission? Did not *Peter,* think you, see a great deal in it? that he should *thus* begin with

these

theſe men, and *thus* offer, ſo particularly, *this* Grace to each particular man of them?

But, as I told you, This is not all. Theſe *Jeruſalem-ſinners*, muſt have this offer again and again; *Every one of them*, muſt be offered it over and over. Chriſt would not take their firſt rejection for a denial; nor their ſecond repulſe for a denial: But he will have Grace offered once, and twice, and thrice, to theſe *Jeruſalem ſinners*. Is not this amazing Grace! Chriſt will not be put off. Theſe are the *Sinners*, that are ſinners *indeed*. They are Sinners of the biggeſt ſort, conſequently ſuch as Chriſt can, if they convert and be ſaved, beſt ſerve his ends and deſigns upon. Of which more anon.

But what a pitch of Grace is this! Chriſt is minded to amaze the World, and to ſhew that he acteth not like the Children of men. This is that which he ſaid of old, *I will not execute the fierceneſs of my wrath, I will not return to deſtroy Ephraim, for I am God and not Man*, Hoſ. 11. 9. This is not the manner of Men; Men are ſhorter winded; Men are ſoon moved to take Vengeance, and to right themſelves in a way of Wrath and Indignation.

nation. But God is full of Grace, full of Patience, ready to forgive, and one that delights in mercy. All this is seen in our Text. The biggeſt ſinners muſt *Firſt* be offered Mercy. They muſt, I ſay, have the Cream of the Goſpel offered unto them.

But we will a little proceed. In the Third Chapter we find, that they who eſcaped Converting by the firſt Sermon, are called upon again, to accept of Grace and Forgiveneſs for their Murder committed upon this Son of God. You have killed; yea, *you have denyed the Holy one and the Juſt, and deſired a Murderer to be granted unto you. And killed the Prince of Life.* Mark, He falls again upon the very Men that actually were, as you have it in the Chapters following, his very *betrayers and murderers*, *Acts* 3. 14, 15. As being loth that they ſhould eſcape the mercy of Forgiveneſs. And Exhorts them again to repent, *that their ſins might be blotted out*, Ver. 19, 20.

Again, in the Fourth Chapter, he charges them afreſh with this Murder, *Ver.* 10. But withall tells them, *Salvation is in no other.* Then like a heavenly *Decoy*, he puts himſelf alſo among them, to draw them the better under

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the Net of the Gospel; saying, *There is none other Name under Heaven given among men whereby We must be saved*, Ver. 12.

In the Fifth Chapter you find them railing at him, because he continued preaching among them Salvation in the Name of *Jesus*. But he tells them, That that very *Jesus* whom they had slain and hanged on a Tree, him God had raised up, and exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance to *Israel*, and Forgiveness of Sins, *Ver.* 29, 30, 31. Still insinuating, that tho they had killed him, and to this day rejected him, yet his business was to bestow upon them, Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins.

'Tis true, after they began to kill again, and when nothing but killing would serve their turn; then they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the Word. Yet even some of them so hankered after the Conversion of the *Jews*, that they preached the Gospel *only* to them. Also the Apostles still made their abode at *Jerusalem*, in hopes that they might yet let down their Net for another draught of these *Jerusalem-sinners*. Neither did *Paul* and *Barnabas*, who were the Ministers of God to the

Gentiles,

Gentiles, but offer the Goſpel in the firſt place to thoſe of them that for their wickedneſs were ſcattered like Vagabonds among the Nations. Yea, and when they rendered Rebellion and Blaſphemy for their Service and Love; they replyed, *It was neceſſary that the Word of God ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to them*, *Acts* 1. 8. *chap.* 13, 46, 47.

Nor was this their preaching unſucceſsful among theſe People: But the Lord *Jeſus* ſo wrought with the Word *thus* ſpoken, that thouſands of them came flocking to him for Mercy. Three thouſand of them cloſed with him at the firſt; and afterwards two thouſand more; for now they were in number about five thouſand; whereas before Sermons was preached to theſe Murderers, the number of the Diſciples were *not above a hundred and twenty*, *Acts* 1. 15. *chap.* 2, 41. *chap.* 4, 4.

Alſo among theſe People that thus flocked to him for Mercy, there was *a great company of the Prieſts*, *chap* 6, 7. Now the Prieſts were they that were the *greateſt* of theſe *biggeſt* ſinners; they were the Ringleaders, they were the Inventors and Ringleaders in the miſchief. 'Twas they that ſet the People againſt the

the Lord *Jesus*, and that was the cause why the uproar increased, until *Pilate* had given Sentence upon him. *The chief Priests and Elders*, says the Text, *perswaded* (the People) *the multitude, that they should ask Barabas, and destroy Jesus*, *Matt.* 27. 20. And yet, *behold*, the Priests, yea, a *great* company of the Priests *became obedient to the Faith.*

Oh the greatness of the Grace of *Christ!* That he should be thus in love with the Souls of *Jerusalem sinners!* That he should be thus delighted with the Salvation of the *Jerusalem-sinners!* That he should not only *will* that his Gospel should be offered them, but that it should be offered unto them *first*, and *before* other Sinners were admitted to a hearing of it; *Begin at Jerusalem.*

Was this Doctrine well believed, where would there be place for a doubt, or a fear of the damnation of the Soul, if the Sinner be penitent; How bad a life soever he has lived, how many soever in number are his sins!

But this Grace is hid from the eyes of men, the Devil hides it from them; for he knows it is alluring; he knows it has an attracting vertue in it. For this

is

is it, that above all arguments, can draw the Soul to God.

I cannot help it, but muſt let drop another Word. The firſt Church, the *Jeruſalem* - Church, from whence the Goſpel was to be ſent into all the World; was a Church made up of *Jeruſalem-ſinners*. Theſe great Sinners were here the moſt ſhining Monuments of the exceeding grace of God.

Thus you ſee, I have proved the Doctrine; and that, not only by ſhewing you, that this was the practice of the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* in his Life-time; but his laſt Will, when he went up to God; ſaying, *Begin to preach at Jeruſalem.*

Yea, it is yet further manifeſted, in that when his Miniſters firſt began to preach there, he joyned his Power to the Word, to the Converting of thouſands of his Betrayers and Murderers; and alſo many of the Ringleading Prieſts, to the Faith.

I now ſhall proceed, and ſhall ſhew you,

1. *The Reaſons of the Point.*

2. *And then make ſome Application of the whole.*

The Obſervation you know, is this, *Jeſus Chriſt would have mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners*, to the

Jeru-

Jeruſalem-ſinners; preach Repentance, and remiſſion of ſins, in my Name, among all Nations, Beginning at Jeruſalem.

The Reaſons of the Point are,

Firſt, *Becauſe the biggeſt Sinners have moſt need thereof.* He that has moſt need, Reaſon ſays, ſhould be helped firſt. I mean, when a helping hand is offered, and now it is. For the Goſpel of the Grace of God is ſent to *help* the World, *Acts* 16. 9. But the biggeſt ſinner has moſt need. Therefore in reaſon, when Mercy is ſent down from Heaven to men, the worſt of men ſhould have the *firſt* offer of it. *Begin at Jeruſalem.* This is the reaſon which the Lord *Chriſt* himſelf renders, why in his Life-time he left the beſt, and turned him to the worſt; why he ſat ſo looſe from the Righteous, and ſtuck ſo cloſe to the Wicked. *The whole*, ſaith he, *have no need of the Phyſician, but the ſick. I came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance*, Mark 2. 15, 16, 17.

Above, you read, that the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* ſaid to his Diſciples, *How is it that he eateth and drinketh with Publicans and Sinners?* Alas, they did not know the reaſon. But the Lord renders them one, and ſuch an one as is both natural

tural and cogent; Saying, *Theſe* have *need, moſt need.* Their great neceſſity requires that I ſhould be moſt friendly, and ſhew my grace *firſt* to them.

Not that the other were ſinleſs, and ſo had *no* need of a Saviour: But the *Publicans* and their companions, were the biggeſt ſinners, they were, as to view, worſe than the *Scribes*, and therefore in reaſon ſhould be helped firſt, becauſe they had moſt need of a Saviour.

Men that are at the point to dye, have more need of the Phyſician, then they that are but now and then troubled with an Heart-fainting qualm. The Publicans and Sinners were as it were, in the mouth of Death, Death was ſwallowing of them down; and therefore the Lord *Jeſus* receives them firſt, offers them mercy firſt. *The whole have no need of the Phyſician, but the ſick. I came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance.* The Sick, as I ſaid, is the biggeſt ſinner, whether he ſees his Diſeaſe or not. He is ſtained from head to foot, from heart to life and converſation. This man in every mans judgment, has the moſt need of mercy. There is nothing attends him from Bed to Board, and from board to bed again, but the viſible characters, and

and obvious ſymptoms of eternal damnation. This therefore is the man that has need, moſt need, and therefore in reaſon ſhould be helped in the firſt place. Thus 'twas with the People concerned in the Text, they were *the worſt of ſinners*, *Jeruſalem-ſinners*, ſinners of the biggeſt ſize, and therefore ſuch as had the greateſt need: Wherefore they muſt have mercy offered to them, before it be offered any where elſe in the World. *Begin at Jeruſalem*, offer mercy firſt to a *Jeruſalem-ſinner*: This man has moſt need, he is fartheſt from God, neareſt to Hell, and ſo one that has *moſt need*. This mans ſins are in *number* the *moſt*, in *cry* the *loudeſt*, in *weight* the *heavieſt*, and conſequently will ſink him ſooneſt: Wherefore he has moſt need of mercy. This man is ſhut up in Satans hand, faſteſt bound in the cords of his ſins; one that Juſtice is whetting his Sword to cut off, and therefore has moſt need, not only of mercy, but that it ſhould be extended to him in the firſt place.

But a little further, to ſhew you the true nature of this Reaſon, to wit, *That Jeſus Chriſt would have mercy offer'd in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners.*

First, Mercy ariſeth from Bowels and Compaſſion, from Pity, and from a feeling of the Condition of thoſe in miſery. *In his Love, and in his Pity, he ſaveth us.* And again, *The Lord is pitiful, very pitiful, and of great mercy*, Iſa. 63. 9. Jam. 5. 11.

Now where Pity and Compaſſion is, there is yearning of Bowels; and where there is that, there is a readineſs to help. And, I ſay again, The more deplorable and dreadful the Condition is, the more directly doth Bowels and Compaſſion turn themſelves to ſuch, and offer help and deliverance. All this flows from our firſt Scripture proof, *I came to call them that have need*; to call them *firſt*, while the reſt look on, and murmur.

How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? Ephraim was a Revolter from God, a man that had given up himſelf to Deviliſm: A company of men, the ten Tribes, that worſhiped Devils, while *Judah* kept with his God. But *how ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael? How ſhall I make thee as Admah? How ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim?* (and yet thou art worſe then they: nor has Samaria committed half thy ſins, Ezek. 16. 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51.) *My heart is turned within me, and my repentings*

pentings are kindled together, Hos. 11. 8.

But where do you find that ever the Lord did thus rowl in his Bowels for, and after any Self-righteous man? No, no, they are the Publicans and Harlots, Idolaters and *Jerusalem-sinners*, for whom his Bowels thus yearn and tumble about within him. For alas! poor Worms, they have most need of mercy.

Had not the good *Samaritan* more compassion for that man that fell among Thieves, (though *that* fall was occasioned by his going from the place where they worshipped God, to *Jerico*, the cursed City) than we read he had for any other besides? His *Wine* was for him, his *Oyl* was for him, his *Beast* for him; his *Penny*, his *Care*, and his *Swadling-bands* for him; for alas, Wretch! he had most need, *Luk.* 10. 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.

Zacheus the Publican, the *chief* of the Publicans, one that had made himself the richer by wronging of others; the Lord at that time singleth him out from all the rest of his brother Publicans, and that in the face of many Pharisees; and proclaimed in the audience of them all, That that day Salvation was come to his house, *Luke* 19. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

The Woman alſo that had been bound down by Satan for eighteen years together, his compaſſions putting him upon it, he looſed her, though thoſe that ſtood by ſnarled at him for ſo doing, *Luk.* 13. 11, 12, 13.

And why the Woman of *Sarepta*, and why *Naaman* the *Syrian*, rather than Widows and Lepers in *Iſrael*; but becauſe their conditions were more deplorable, (for that) they were moſt forlorn, and fartheſt from help, *Luk.* 4. 25, 27.

But I ſay, why all theſe, *thus* named? why have we not a Catalogue of ſome Holy men that were ſo in their own eyes, and in the judgment of the World? Alas! if at any time any of them are mentioned, how ſeemingly coldly doth the Record of Scripture preſent them to us? *Nicodemus*, a Night-Profeſſor, and *Simon* the Phariſee, with his Fifty Pence; and their great ignorance of the methods of Grace, we have now and then touched upon.

Mercy ſeems to be out of his proper Chanel, when it deals with Self-righteous men; but then it runs with a full ſtream when it extends it ſelf to the biggeſt ſinners. As God's mercy is not regulated by Man's goodneſs, nor obtained

ed by Man's worthiness; so not much set out by saving of any such. But more of this anon.

And here let me ask my *Reader* a Question: Suppose that as thou art walking by some Pond side, thou shouldst espy in it, four or five Children all in danger of drowning, and one in more danger than all the rest; judge which has most need to be helped out first? I know thou wilt say, he that is neareſt drowning. Why, this is the case; the bigger Sinner, the nearer drowning; therefore the bigger sinner, the more need of mercy; yea, of help by mercy in the first place. And to this our Text agrees, when it saith, *Beginning at Jerusalem.* Let the *Jerusalem-sinner*, says Christ, have the *first* offer, the *first* invitation, the *first* tender of my grace and mercy, for he is the biggest sinner, and so has most need thereof.

Secondly, Christ Jesus would have mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggest sinners; because when *they*, any of *them*, receive it, *it redounds most to the fame of his Name.*

Christ Jesus, as you may perceive, has put himself under the term of a Physician, or Doctor for curing of Diseases:

And you know that Applauſe, and a Fame, is a thing that Phyſicians much deſire. That is it that helps them to *Patients*, and that alſo that will help their *Patients* to commit themſelves to their Skill for Cure, with the more confidence and repoſe of Spirit. And the beſt way for a Doctor or Phyſician to get themſelves a Name, is in the firſt place to take in hand, and Cure ſome ſuch as all others have given off for loſt and dead. Phyſicians get neither Name nor Fame by pricking of *Wheals* or picking out *Thiſtles*, or by laying of Plaiſters to the ſcratch of a *Pin* Every old Woman can do this. But if they will have a Name and a Fame, if they will have it quickly, they muſt, as I ſaid, do ſome great and deſperate Cures. Let them fetch one to Life that was Dead; let them recover one to his Wits, that was Mad; let them make one that was born Blind, to See; or let them give ripe Wits to a Fool; theſe are notable Cures; and he that can do thus, and if he doth thus firſt, he ſhall have the *Name* and *Fame* he deſires; he may lye a Bed till Noon.

Why, *Chriſt Jeſus* forgiveth Sins for a Name, and ſo begets of himſelf a good Report in the hearts of the Children of men.

men. And therefore in reason, he must be willing, as also he did command, that his mercy should be offered first to the biggest sinners.

I will forgive their sins, iniquities, and transgressions, says he, *and it shall turn to me for a name of Joy, and a praise, and an honour, before all the Nations of the earth*, *Jer.* 33. 8, 9.

And hence it is that at his first appearing he took upon him to do such mighty works. He got a Fame thereby; he got a Name thereby, *Matt.* 4. 23, 24.

When *Christ* had cast the legion of Devils out of the man of whom you read, *Mark* 5. He bid him go home to his Friends and tell it. *Go home*, said he, *to thy friends, and tell them how great things God has done for thee, and has had compassion on thee*, *Mark* 5. 19. *Christ Jesus* seeks a Name, and desireth a Fame in the World; and therefore, or the better to obtain that, he commands that mercy should first be proffered to the biggest sinners, because by the saving of one of them, he makes all men marvel. As 'tis said of the man last mentioned, whom *Christ* cured toward the beginning of his Ministry: *And he departed*, says the Text, *and began to publish in Deca-*

polis, how great things Jesus had done for him, and all men did marvel, Ver. 20.

When *John* told *Christ*, that they saw one casting out Devils in his Name, and they forbad him because he followed not with them: What is the answer of *Christ? Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my Name, that can lightly speak evil of me.* No, they will rather cause his Praise to be heard, and his Name to be magnified, and so put Glory on the head of *Christ*.

But we will follow a little our Metaphor: *Christ*, as I said, has put himself under the term of a Physician; Consequently he desireth that his Fame, as to the Salvation of sinners, may spread abroad, that the World may see what he can do. And to this end, has not only commanded that the biggest sinners should have the first offer of his mercy; but has, as Physicians do, put out his Bills, and published his doings, that things may be read and talked of. Yea, he has moreover in these his blessed Bills, the Holy Scriptures, I mean, inserted the very Names of Persons, the places of their abode, and the great Cures that by the means of his Salvations he has wrought upon them to this very end.

Here

Here is, *Item*, Such a one by my grace and redeeming Blood, was made a Monument of everlasting Life: And such a one by my perfect Obedience, became an Heir of Glory. And then he produceth their Names.

Item, I saved *Lot* from the guilt and damnation that he had procured to himself by his *incest*.

Item, I saved *David* from the Vengeance that belonged to him for committing of Adultery and Murder.

Here is also *Solomon*, *Manasseth*, *Peter*, *Magdalen*, and many others made mention of in this Book. Yea, here are their Names, their Sins, and their Salvations recorded together, that you may read, and know what a Saviour he is, and do him honour in the World. For why are these things thus recorded, but to shew to sinners what he can do, to the praise and glory of his grace?

And it is observable, as I said before, we have but very little of the Salvation of little sinners mentioned in God's Book, because that would not have answered the design, to wit, to bring glory and fame to the Name of the Son of God.

What should be the reason, think you, why *Christ* should so easily take a denial

of the great ones, that *wear* the Grandure of the World, and ſtruggle ſo hard for Hedg creepers and Highway men, (as that Parable, *Luke* 14. ſeems to import he doth) but to ſhew forth the riches of the glory of his Grace to his praiſe. This, I ſay, is one Reaſon to be ſure.

They that had their Grounds, their yoke of Oxen, and their marriage Joys, were invited to come; but they made their excuſe, and that ſerved the turn. But when he comes to deal with the worſt, he ſaith to his Servants, Go ye *out* and *bring* them in hither. *Go out quickly and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. And they did ſo.* And he ſaid again, *Go out into the high ways, and hedges, and Compel them to come in, that my houſe may be filled*, Luk. 14.18,19,23. Theſe poor, lame, maimed, blind, hedg-creepers, and high-way men, *Muſt* come in, *Muſt* be forced in. Theſe, if ſaved, will make his Merits ſhine.

When *Chriſt* was crucified, and hanged up between the Earth and Heavens, there was two Thieves crucified with him; and, behold, he lays hold of one of them, and will have him away with him

him to Glory. Was not this a ſtrange act, and a diſplay of unthought-of grace? were there none but Thieves there, or were the reſt of that company out of his reach? Could he not, think you, have ſtooped from the Croſs to the Ground, and have laid hold on ſome honeſter man if he would? Yes, doubtleſs. Oh, but then he would not ſo have diſplayed his Grace, nor ſo have purſued his own deſigns; namely, to get to himſelf a praiſe and a name; But now he has done it to purpoſe. For who that ſhall read this Story, but muſt confeſs that the Son of God is full of grace; for a proof of the riches thereof, he left behind him, when upon the Croſs, he took the Thief away with him to glory. Nor can this one act of his be buried: It will be talked of to the end of the World to his praiſe. *Men ſhall ſpeak of the might of thy terrible acts; and will declare thy greatneſs. They ſhall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodneſs, and ſhall ſing of thy righteouſneſs. They ſhall ſpeak of the glory of thy Kingdom, and talk of thy power. To make known to the Sons of men, his mighty acts, and the glorious Majeſty of his Kingdom,* Pſal. 145. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

When the Word of God came among the

he Conjurers and thoſe Sooth-ſayers, that you read of *Acts* 19. and had prevailed with ſome of them to accept of the grace of *Chriſt*, the Holy Ghoſt records it with a *boaſt*, for that it would redound to his praiſe; ſaying,

And many of them that uſed curious Arts, brought their Books together and burned them before all men, and counted the price of them, and found it fifty thouſand pieces of Silver. So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed, Acts 19. 19,20. It wrenched out of the clutches of Satan, ſome of thoſe of whom he thought himſelf moſt ſure. *So mightily grew the Word of God.* It grew mightily, it incroached upon the Kingdom of the Devil! It purſued him, and took the prey: It forced him to let go his hold! It brought away captive, as Priſoners taken by force of Arms, ſome of the moſt valiant of his Army. It fetcht back from, as it were, the confines of Hell, ſome of thoſe that were his moſt truſty, and that with Hell had been at an agreement. It made them come and confeſs their deeds, and burn their Books before all men: *So mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed.*

Thus

Thus therefore you see why Christ will have Mercy offered in the first place to the biggest Sinners. They have most need thereof; and this is the most ready way to extol his name that rideth upon the Heavens to our help. But,

Thirdly, Christ Jesus would have Mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners, *Because by their Forgiveness and Salvation, others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to him for Life.*

For the Physitian by curing of the most desperate at the first, doth not only *get* himself a Name, but *begets* Encouragement in the minds of other diseased folk to come to him for help. Hence you read of our Lord, that after, through his tender mercy, he had Cured many of great Diseases, his Fame was spread abroad: *They brought unto him all sick People that were taken with divers Diseases and Torments, and those which were possessed with Devils, and those that were Lunatick, and those that had the Palsie, and he healed them; and there followed him great multitudes of People from* Galilee, *and* Decapolis, *and* Jerusalem, *and* Judea, *and from beyond* Jordan, Mat. 4. 24, 25.

See here, He first by working, gets himself a Fame, a Name, and Renown,

and

and now men take Encouragement, and bring from all quarters their Diſeaſed to him, being helped by what they had heard, to believe that their Diſeaſed ſhould be healed.

Now, as he did with thoſe outward Cures, ſo he does in the proffers of his Grace and Mercy; he proffers *that* in the firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners, that others may take Heart to come to him to be ſaved. I will give you a Scripture or two, I mean, to ſhew you that Chriſt by commanding that his Mercy ſhould in the firſt place be offered to the biggeſt of Sinners, has a deſign, thereby to encourage and provoke others to come alſo to him for Mercy.

God, ſaith Paul, *who is rich in Mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in our ſins hath quickened us together with Chriſt, (by Grace ye are ſaved) and hath raiſed us up together, and made us ſit together in Heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus.* But why did he do all this? *That in the Ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding Riches of his Grace in his kindneſs towards us thorow Chriſt Jeſus*, Epheſ. 2. 4, 5, 6, 7.

See, here's a deſign, God lets out his Mercy to *Epheſus* of deſign, even to ſhew

to

to the Ages to come, the exceeding Riches of his Grace in his kindneſs to them thorow Chriſt Jeſus. And why to ſhew by theſe, the exceeding Riches of his Grace to the Ages to come thorow Chriſt Jeſus? But to alure, them and their Children alſo to come to him, and to partake of the ſame Grace thorow Chriſt Jeſus.

But what was *Paul*, and the *Epheſian-Sinners?* (of *Paul* we will ſpeak anon) Theſe *Epheſian-Sinners*, They were men dead in Sins, men that walked according to the dictates and motions of the Devil; worſhippers of *Diana*, that Effeminate Goddeſs: men far off from God, aliens and ſtrangers to all good things, ſuch as were far off from that, as I ſaid, and conſequently in a moſt deplorable condition. As the *Jeruſalem-Sinners* were of the higheſt ſort among the *Jews*, ſo theſe *Epheſian Sinners* were of the higheſt ſort among the *Gentiles*. (*Epheſ.* 2. 1, 2, 3. *Acts* 19. 35. *Epheſ.* 2. 11, 12.)

Wherefore as by the *Jeruſalem-ſinners*, in ſaving them firſt, he had a deſign to provoke others to come to him for Mercy; ſo, The ſame deſign is here ſet on foot again, in his calling and converting the *Epheſian-Sinners*; that in the Ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding Riches

Riches of his Grace, ſays he, *in his kindneſs towards us thorow Chriſt Jeſus.* There is yet one hint behind. 'Tis ſaid that God ſaved theſe FOR *his love.* That is, as I think, for the ſetting forth, for the commendations of his love, for the advance of his love in the Hearts and minds of them that ſhould come after. As who ſhould ſay, God has had Mercy upon, and been Gracious *to* you, that he might ſhew to others for their encouragement, that they have ground to come to him to be ſaved: *When God ſaves one great Sinner, 'tis to encourage another great Sinner to come to him for Mercy.*

He ſaved the *Thief*, to encourage *Thieves* to come to him for Mercy. He ſaved *Magdalen*, to encourage other *Magdalens* to come to him for Mercy. He ſaved *Saul*, to encourage *Saul's* to come to him for Mercy. And this *Paul* himſelf doth ſay, *For this cauſe*, ſaith he, *I obtained Mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long ſuffering for a Pattern to them which ſhould hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting*, 1 Tim. 1. 16.

How plain are the words! Chriſt in ſaving of me, has given to the World a Patern of his Grace, that they might ſee, and believe, and come, and be ſaved.

That

That they that are to be born *hereafter*, might believe on Jeſus Chriſt to life everlaſting.

But what was *Paul*? Why he tells you himſelf, *I am*, ſays he, *the chief of Sinners*; *I was*, ſays he, *a Blaſphemer, a Perſecutor*; *an injurious Perſon: but I obtained Mercy*, 1 Tim. 1. 14, 15. Ay, that's well for you *Paul*; but what advantage have we thereby? Oh very much, ſaith he; *For, for this cauſe I obtained Mercy*, that in me *Firſt*, Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew all long ſuffering for a pattern to them which ſhall believe on him to life everlaſting.

Thus therefore you ſee that this third Reaſon is of ſtrength, namely, That Jeſus Chriſt would have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners, *becauſe, by their Forgiveneſs and Salvation, others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to him for Mercy*.

It may well thereſcre be ſaid to God, *Thou delighteſt in Mercy, and Mercy pleaſes thee*, Mich. 7. 18.

But who believes that this was Gods deſign in ſhewing Mercy of old? Namely, That we that come after might take courage to come to him for Mercy; or that Jeſus Chriſt would have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners, to

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ſtir up others to come to him for Life. This is not the manner of men! O God!

But *David* ſaw this betimes, therefore he makes this one Argument with God, That he would blot out his Tranſgreſſions, that he would forgive his Adultery, his Murders, and horrible Hypocriſy. *Do it, O Lord*, ſaith he, do it, And *then will I teach Tranſgreſſors thy ways, and Sinners ſhall be Converted unto thee*, Pſal. 51. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

He knew that the Converſion of Sinners would be a work highly pleaſing to God, as being that which he had deſigned before he made Mountain or Hill: Wherefore he comes, and he ſaith, Save me, O Lord; if thou wilt but ſave me, I will fall in with thy deſign. I will help to bring what Sinners to thee I can. And Lord, I am willing to be made a Preacher my ſelf, for that I have been a horrible Sinner; wherefore, if thou ſhalt forgive my great Tranſgreſſions, I ſhall be a fit man to tell of thy wonderous Grace to others. Yea, Lord, I dare promiſe, that if thou wilt have mercy upon me, it ſhall tend to the glory of thy Grace, and alſo to the increaſe of thy Kingdom; for I will tell it, and Sinners will hear on't. And there is nothing ſo ſuiteth with the hearing

hearing Sinner, as Mercy: and to be inform'd that God is willing to bestow it upon him. *I will teach Transgressors thy ways, and Sinners shall be Converted unto thee.*

Nor will Christ Jesus miss of his design in profering of Mercy in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners. You know what work the Lord, by laying hold of the Woman of *Samaria*, made among the People there. They knew that she was a *Town-Sinner*, an Adultress. Yea, one that after the most audacious manner, lived in Uncleanness with a man that was not her Husband. But when she, from a turn upon her Heart, went into the City, and said to her Neighbours, *Come*; Oh how they came! how they flocked out of the City to Jesus Christ! *Then they went out of the City, and came to him, and many of the Samaritans* (People perhaps as bad as her self) *believed on him, for the saying of the woman, which testified, saying, He told me all that ever I did* (John 4. 39.)

That word, *He told me all that ever I did*, was a great Argument with them; for by that they gathered, That tho he knew her to be vile, yet he did not despise her, nor refuse to shew how willing he was to communicate his Grace unto her:

her: And this fetched over, first her, then them.

This woman, as I said, was a *Samaritan-Sinner*, a Sinner of the worst Complexion. For the *Jews* abhorred to have ought to do with them (*verse* 9.), wherefore none more fit then she to be made one of the *Decoys* of Heaven, to bring others of these *Samaritan Wild Fowls* under the Net of the Grace of Christ. And she did the work to purpose. Many, and many more of the *Samaritans* believed on him, *Verse* 40, 41, 42. The Heart of man, tho set on Sin, will, when it comes once to a perswasion that God is willing to have Mercy upon us, incline to come to Jesus Christ for life; witness those turn-a-ways from God, that you also read of in *Jeremiah*; for after they had heard three or four times over, that God had Mercy for back-sliders, they broke out and said, *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* Or as those in *Hosea* did, *For in thee the Fatherless find mercy.* (Jer. 3. 22. Hos. 14. 1, 2, 3.)

Mercy, and the revelation thereof, is the only Antidote against Sin. 'Tis of a thawing nature: 'twill loose the Heart that is frozen up in Sin: yea, 'twill make the Unwilling willing to come to Jesus Christ for Life. Where-

Wherefore do you think was it that Jesus Christ told the Adulterous woman, and that before so many Sinners, *That he had not Condemned her*, but to alure her, with them there present, to hope to find favour at his hands. (As he also saith in another place, *I came not to Judge, but to Save the World*) for might they not thence most rationally conclude, That if Jesus Christ had rather save, then damn an Harlot, there was encouragement for them to come to him for Mercy.

I heard once a story from a Souldier, who with his Company had laid Siege against a Fort, that so long as the Besieged were perswaded their Foes would show them no favour, they Fought like Madmen; but when they saw one of their Fellows taken, and received to favour, they all came tumbling down from their Fortress, and delivered themselves into their Enemies hands.

I am perswaded, did men believe that there is that Grace and Willingness in the Heart of Christ to save Sinners, as the Word import there is, they would come tumbling into his Arms: But Satan has blinded their Minds, that they cannot see this thing. Howbeit the Lord Jesus has, as I said, that others might take Heart

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and come to him, given out a commandment that Mercy ſhould in the firſt place be offered to the biggeſt Sinners. *Begin*, ſaith he, *at Jeruſalem*. And thus I end the third Reaſon.

Fourthly, Jeſus Chriſt would have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners, *Becauſe that is the way, if they receive it, moſt to weaken the Kingdom of Satan, and to keep it loweſt in every Age of the World.* The biggeſt Sinners, they are Satans *Colonels*, and *Captains*, the Leaders of his People, and they that moſt ſtoutly make Head againſt the Son of God. Wherefore let theſe *firſt* be conquered, and his Kingdom will be weak. When *Iſhboſheth* had loſt his *Abner*, his Kingdom was made weak, nor did he ſit but *tottering then* upon his Throne. So when Satan loſeth his ſtrong men, them that are mighty to work Iniquity, and *dextrous* to manage others in the ſame, then is his Kingdom weak (2 *Sam.* 3) Therefore I ſay, Chriſt doth offer Mercy in the firſt place to ſuch, the more to weaken his Kingdom. Chriſt Jeſus was glad to ſee Satan fall like Lightning from Heaven, that is ſuddenly or headlong; and it was, ſurely, by caſting of him out of ſtrong Poſſeſſions, and by recovering of

of ſome notorious Sinners out of his Clutches, (*Luke* 10. 17, 18, 19.)

Sampſon, when he would pull down the *Philiſtians* Temple, took hold of the two main Pillars of it, and breaking them, down came the Houſe. Chriſt came to deſtroy the works of the Devil, and to deſtroy by converting Grace, as well as by redeeming Blood. Now Sin ſwarms and lieth by Legions, and whole Armies, in the Souls of the biggeſt Sinners, as in Garriſons: Wherefore the way, the moſt direct way to deſtroy it, is firſt to deal with ſuch Sinners, by the Word of his Goſpel, and by the Merits of his Paſſion.

For Example, tho I ſhall give you but a homely one; Suppoſe a Family to be very Lowzy, and one or two of the Family to be *in chief* the breeders; the way, the quickeſt way, to clear that Family, or at leaſt to weaken the ſo ſwarming of thoſe Vermine, is, in the *firſt place* to ſweeten the Skin, Head, and Cloaths of the *chief breeders*: And then, though all the Family ſhould be apt to breed them, the number of them, and ſo the greatneſs of that Plague there, will be the more impaired.

Why

Why, there are ſome people that are in chief the Devils *Sin-breeders* in the Towns and Places where they live. The Place, Town, or Family where they live, muſt needs be horrible lowſie, and as it were, eaten up with *Vermin*: Now let the Lord *Jeſus* in the firſt place cleanſe theſe great breeders, and there will be given a nip to thoſe ſwarms of Sins that uſe to be committed in ſuch places throughout the Town, Houſe, or Family where ſuch *ſin-breeding* Perſons uſed to be.

I ſpeak by Experience; I was one of theſe lowzy ones, one of theſe great *ſin-breeders*; I infected all the Youth of the Town where I was born, with all manner of youthful Vanities. The neighbours counted me ſo, my practiſe proved me ſo: Wherefore *Chriſt Jeſus* took me firſt; and taking me firſt, the Contagion was much allayed all the Town over. When God made me ſigh, they would harken, and enquiringly ſay, *What's the matter with* John? They alſo gave their various opinions of me: But as I ſaid, Sin cooled, and failed, as to his full *carrier*. When I went out to ſeek the Bread of Life, ſome of them would follow, and the reſt be put into a muſe at home. Yea, almoſt the Town, *at firſt*, at

at times, would go out to hear at the place where I found good: Yea, young and old for a while had some reformation on them; also some of them perceiving that God had mercy upon me, came crying to him for mercy too.

But what need I give you an Instance of poor I; I will come to *Manasseth* the King: So long as he was a ringleading Sinner, the great Idolater, and chief for Deviliſm, the whole Land flowed with wickedneſs; *For he made them to ſin*, and do worſe than the Heathen that dwelt round about them, or that was caſt out from before them. But when God converted him, the whole Land was reformed. Down went the Groves, the Idols, and Altars of *Baal*, and up went true Religion in much of the Power and Purity of it. You'll ſay, The King reformed by Power. I anſwer, doubtleſs, and by Example too; for People obſerve their Leaders; as their Fathers did, ſo did they, 2 *Chron.* 33. 2 *King.* 17. 41.

This therefore is another Reaſon, why *Jeſus* would have mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners, becauſe that is the beſt way, if they receive it, moſt to weaken the kingdom of Satan, and to keep it poor and low.

And do you not think now, that if God would but take hold of the hearts of some of the most notorious in your Town, in your Family, or Countrey, that this thing would be verified before your faces? It would, it would, to the Joy of you that are godly, to the making of Hell to sigh, to the great suppressing of Sin, the glory of *Christ*, and the joy of the Angels of God. And Ministers should therefore, that this Work might go on, take advantages to perswade with the biggest Sinners to come into *Christ*, according to *my* Text, and *their* Commissions: *Beginning at Jerusalem.*

Fifthly, *Jesus Christ* would have mercy offered in the *first* place to the biggest sinners. *Because such, when converted, are usually the best helps in the Church against temptations, and fittest for the support of the feeble minded there.* Hence, usually, you have some such in the first plantation of Churches; or quickly upon it. Churches would do but sorrily, if *Christ Jesus* did not put such Converts among them; they are the Monuments and Mirrors of Mercy. The very sight of such a Sinner in God's House, yea, the very thought of him, where the sight of him cannot

cannot be had is oft times greatly for the help of the Faith of the feeble.

When the Churches (said *Paul*) *that were in Judea, heard this concerning me, that he which persecuted them in time past, now preached the Faith which once he destroyed, They glorified God in me, Gal.* 1.20,21,22, 23, 24.

Glorified God] How is that? Why, they praised him, and took courage to believe the more in the mercy of God: For that he had had mercy on such a great sinner as he. They glorified God [*in me*] They wondred that Grace should be so rich, as to take hold of such a Wretch as I was; and for my sake believed in *Christ* the more.

There are two things that great sinners are acquainted with, when they come to divulge them to the Saints, that are a great relief to their Faith.

1. The Contests that they usually have with the Devil at their parting with him.

2. Their knowledge of his Secrets in his workings.

For the *First*, The biggest sinners have usually great contests with the Devil at their partings; and this is an help to Saints. For ordinary Saints find after-

wards what the vile ones find at first; but when at the opening of hearts the one finds himself to be as the other, the one is a comfort to the other. The lesser sort of sinners find but little of this, till after they have been some time in profession; but the Vile Man meets with his at the beginning. Wherefore he, when the other is down, is ready to tell that he has met with the same before. For I say, he has had it before. Satan is loth to part with a great sinner. What, my true Servant (quoth he) my old Servant, wilt thou forsake me now? Having so often sold thy self to me to work wickedness, wilt thou forsake me now? Thou horrible Wretch, dost not know, that thou hast sinned thy self beyond the reach of Grace, and dost think to find Mercy now? Art not thou a Murderer, a Thief, a Harlot, a Witch, a sinner of the greatest size, and dost thou look for mercy now? dost thou think that *Christ* will foul his fingers with thee?

'Tis enough to make Angels blush, *saith Satan*, to see so vile a one knock at Heaven gates for Mercy, and wilt thou be so abominable bold to do it? Thus Satan dealt with me, says the great Sinner, when at first I came to *Jesus Christ*. *And what*

what did you reply, saith the Tempted? Why, I granted the whole Charge to be true, says the other. *And what, did you dispair? or how?* No (saith he) I said, I am *Magdalene*, I am *Zacheus*, I am the *Thief*, I am the *Harlot*, I am the *Publican*, I am the *Prodigal*, and one of *Christ*'s Murderers: Yea, worse than any of these, and yet God was so far off from rejecting of me (as I found afterwards) that there was musick and dancing in his House for me, and for Joy that I was come home unto him. *Oh blessed be God for Grace*, (says the other) *for then I hope there is favour for me.* Yea, as I told you, such a one is a continual Spectacle in the Church, for every one *by*, to behold God's grace, and wonder!

Secondly, And as for the Secrets of Satan, such as are Suggestions to question the Being of God, the truth of his Word, and to be annoyed with deviliſh Blaſphemies: None more acquainted with these than the biggest sinners at their Conversion; wherefore thus also they are prepared to be helps in the Church to relieve and comfort the other.

I might also here tell you of the Contests and Battels that such are engaged in, wherein they find the buffettings of

Satan, above any other the Saints. At which times Satan aſſaults the Soul with darkneſs, fears, frightful thoughts of Apparitions; now they ſweat, pant, cry out, and ſtruggle for life.

The Angels now come down to behold the fight, and rejoyce to ſee a bit of Duſt and Aſhes to overcome Principalities and Powers, and Might, and Dominions. But, as I ſaid, when theſe come a little to be ſetled, they are prepared for help for others, and are great Comforts unto unto them. Their great ſins give encouragement to the Devil to aſſault them, and by theſe temptations *Chriſt* takes advantage to make them the more helpful to the Churches.

The biggeſt ſinner, when he is Converted and comes into the Church, ſays to them all, by his very coming in, *Behold me, all you that are Men and Women of a low and timorous ſpirit; you whoſe hearts are narrow, for that you never had the advantage to know, becauſe your ſins are few, the largeneſs of the grace of God. Behold, I ſay, in me, the exceeding riches of his grace! I am a Pattern ſet forth before your faces, on whom you may look and take heart.* This, I ſay, the great ſinner can ſay, to the exceeding comfort of all the reſt. Where-

Wherefore, as I have hinted before, when God intends to ſtock a place with Saints, and to make that place excellently to flouriſh with the riches of his grace, he uſually begins with the Converſion of ſome of the moſt notorious there abouts, and lays them as an Example to allure others, and to build up when they are converted.

'Twas *Paul* that muſt go to the *Gentiles*, becauſe *Paul* was the moſt outragious of all the Apoſtles, in the time of his unregeneracy: Yea, *Peter* muſt be he that after his horrible fall, was thought fitteſt, when recovered again, to comfort and ſtrengthen his Brethren. See *Luke* 22. 31, 32.

Some muſt be Pillars in God's Houſe, and if they be Pillars of Cedar, they muſt ſtand while they are ſtout and ſturdy ſticks in the Forreſt, before they are cut down, and planted or placed there.

No man, when he buildeth his Houſe, makes the principal parts thereof, of weak or feeble Timber; for how could ſuch bear up the reſt; but of great and able Wood. *Chriſt Jeſus* alſo goeth this way to work, he makes of the biggeſt Sinners, Bearers and Supporters to

the rest. This then may serve for another Reason, why *Jesus Christ* gives out in Commandment, that Mercy should in the first place be offered to the biggest Sinners, *Because such when converted, are usually the best helps in the Church against temptations, and fittest for the support of the feeble-minded there.*

Sixthly, Another reason, why *Jesus Christ* would have Mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners, is, Because *They, when converted, are apt to love him most.*

This agrees both with Scripture, and Reason. Scripture says so. *To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little*, Luk. 7. 47. Reason says so. For as it would be the unreasonablest thing in the world, to render hatred for love, and contempt for forgiveness; so 'twould be as ridiculous to think that the reception of a little kindness should lay the same obligations upon the heart to love, as the reception of a great deal. I would not disparage the love of *Christ*; I know the least dram of it, when it reaches to *forgiveness*, is great above all the world; But comparatively, there is greater extentions of the love of *Christ*,

to

to one, than to another: He that has moſt ſin, if forgiven, is partaker of the greateſt love, of the greateſt forgiveneſs.

I know alſo, that there are ſome, that from this very Doctrine, ſay, *Let us do evil, that good may come*; and that turn the Grace of our God into Laſciviouſneſs. But I ſpeak not of theſe, Theſe will neither be ruled by *Grace* nor *Reaſon*. *Grace* would teach them, if they know it, to deny Ungodly Courſes; and ſo would *Reaſon* too, if it could truly ſenſe the Love of God, *Tim.* 2. 11, 12. *Rom.* 11, 1.

Doth it look like what hath any Coherence with Reaſon or Mercy, for a man to abuſe his Friend? Becauſe Chriſt died for men, ſhall I therefore Spit in his Face? The Bread and Water that was given by *Eliſha* to his Enemies, that came into the Land of *Iſrael* to take him, had ſo much influence upon their Minds, tho *Heathens*, that they returned to their homes without hurting him: Yea, it kept them from coming again in a hoſtile manner into the Coaſts of *Iſrael*, 2 *Kings* 6. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.

But to forbear to Illuſtrate till anon; one reaſon why Chriſt Jeſus ſhews Mercy to Sinners, *is that he might obtain their*

Love, that he may remove their baſe affections, from baſe objects, to himſelf. Now if he loves to be loved a little, he loves to be loved much; but there is not any that are capable of loving much, ſave thoſe that have much forgiven them. Hence 'tis ſaid of *Paul*, That he laboured more than them all, to wit, with a labour of love, becauſe he had been by Sin more vile againſt *Chriſt* than they all, 1 *Cor.* 15. He it was that perſecuted the Church of God, and waſted it, *Gal.* 1. 13. He, of them all, was the only raving Bedlam againſt the Saints: *And being exceeding mad*, ſays he, *againſt them, I perſecuted them even to ſtrange Cities*, Acts 26 11.

This raving Bedlam, that once was ſo, is he that now ſays, *I laboured more then them all; more for Chriſt then them all.*

But Paul, *what moved thee thus to do?* The love of *Chriſt*, ſays he. It was not I, but the grace of God that was with me. As who ſhould ſay; *O Grace!* 'Twas ſuch Grace to ſave me! 'Twas ſuch marvellous Grace for God to look down from Heaven upon me, and that ſecured me from the wrath to come, that I am captivated with the ſenſe of the riches of it. Hence I act, hence I labour;

bour; For how can I otherwiſe do, ſince God not only ſeparated me from my Sins and Companions, but ſeparated all the powers of my Soul and Body to his Service? I am therefore *prompted* on by this exceeding love, to labour as I have done; yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Oh! I ſhall never forget his love, nor the circumſtances under which I was, when his love laid hold upon me. I was going to *Damaſcus* with Letters from the High Prieſt to make Havock of God's People there, as I had made Havock of them in other places. Theſe bloody Letters was not impoſed upon me. I went to the High Prieſt and deſired them of him, *Acts* 9. 1, 2. And yet he ſaved me! I was one of the men, of the chief men that had a hand in the Blood of his Martyr *Stephen*, yet he had mercy on me! When I was at *Damaſcus*, I ſtunck ſo horribly like a Blood ſucker, that I became a Terrour to all thereabout: Yea, *Ananias* (good man) made interceſſion to my Lord againſt me, yet he would have mercy upon me! Yea, joyned mercy to mercy, untill he had made me a monument of grace. He made a Saint of me, and perſwaded me, that my tranſgreſſions were forgiven me. When

When I began to preach, thoſe that heard me were amazed; and ſaid, *Is not this he that deſtroyed them that called on this Name in Jeruſalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound to the High Prieſt?* Hell doth know that I was a Sinner; Heaven doth know that I was a Sinner: The World alſo knows that I was a Sinner, a Sinner of the greateſt ſize; but I obtained mercy, *Acts* 9. 20, 21.

Shall not this lay Obligation upon me? Is not Love of the greateſt force to oblige? Is it not ſtrong as Death? Cruel as the Grave? and hotter than the Coals of *Juniper?* Hath it not a moſt vehement flame? Can the Waters quench it? Can the Floods drown it? I am under the force of it, and this is my continual cry, *What ſhall I render to the Lord for all the Benefits which he has beſtowed upon me?*

Ay! *Paul*, this is ſomething, thou ſpeakeſt like a Man, like a man affected, and carried away with the love and grace of God. Now this ſenſe, and this affection, and this labour, giveth to *Chriſt* the love that he looks for. But he might have converted twenty little ſinners, and yet not found, for grace beſtowed, *So* much love in them all. I,

I wonder how far a man might go among the Converted Sinners of the ſmaller ſize, before one could find one that ſo much as looks any thing this wayward. Where is he that is thus under pangs of love for the Grace beſtowed upon him by *Jeſus Chriſt*? Excepting only ſome few; you may walk to the Worlds end and find none. But, as I ſaid, ſome there are, and ſo there has been in every age of the Church, great ſinners, that have had much forgiven them. And they love much upon this account.

Jeſus Chriſt therefore knows what he doth, when he lays hold on the hearts of ſinners of the biggeſt ſize. He knows that ſuch an one will love more than many that have not ſinned half their ſins.

I will tell you a Story that I have read of *Martha* and *Mary*; the Name of the Book I have forgot. I mean of the Book in which I found the Relation; but the thing was thus:

Martha, ſaith my Author, was a very holy Woman, much like *Lazarus*, her Brother; but *Mary* was a looſe and wanton creature. *Martha* did ſeldom miſs good Sermons, and Lectures, when ſhe could come at them in *Jeruſalem*; but

Mary

Mary would frequent the house of Sports, and the company of the vilest of Men for lust. And though *Martha* had often desired that her Sister would go with her to hear her Preachers: Yea, had often entreated her with Tears, to do it, yet could she never prevail; for still *Mary* would make her excuse, or reject her with disdain for her Zeal and Precisenes in Religion.

After *Martha* had waited long, tried many ways to bring her Sister to good, and all proved ineffectual. At last, she comes upon her thus. *Sister*, quoth she, *I pray thee go with me to the Temple to day, to hear one preach a Sermon.* What kind of Preacher is he, said she? *Martha* replied, *It is one* Jesus of Nazareth, *he is the handsomest man that ever you saw with your eyes. Oh! he shines in Beauty, and is a most excellent Preacher.*

Now what does *Mary*? After a little paute, but goes up into her Chamber, and with her Pins and her Clouts, decks up her self as fine as her fingers could make her. This done, away she goes, not with her Sister *Martha*, but as much unobserved as she could, to the Sermon, or rather to *See* the Preacher.

The

The Hour and Preacher being come, and ſhe having obſerved whereabout the Preacher would ſtand, goes and ſets her ſelf ſo in the *Temple*, that ſhe might be ſure to have the full view of this excellent Perſon. So he comes in, and ſhe looks, and the firſt glimps of his Perſon pleaſed her. Well, *Jeſus* addreſſeth himſelf to his Sermon, and ſhe looks earneſtly on him.

Now at that time, ſaith my Author, *Jeſus* preached about the *loſt Sheep*, the *loſt Groat*, and the *prodigal Child*. And when he came to ſhew what care the Shepherd took for one loſt Sheep, and how the Woman ſwept to find her Piece which was loſt, and what Joy there was at their finding; ſhe began to be taken *by the Ears*, and forgot what ſhe came about, muſing what the Preacher would make on't; But when he came to the Application, and ſhewed that by the loſt Sheep was meant a great Sinner; by the Shepherds care was meant God's love for great Sinners; and that by the joy of the Neighbours, was ſhewed what joy there was among the Angels in Heaven over one great Sinner that repenteth; She began to be taken *by the Heart*. And as he ſpake theſe laſt words, ſhe thought he

he pitched his innocent Eyes just upon her, and looked as if he spake what was now said, to her. Wherefore her heart began to tremble, being shaken with affection and fear; then her Eyes run down with tears apace; wherefore she was forced to hide her face with her *Handkerchief*, and so sat sobbing and crying all the rest of the Sermon.

Sermon being done, up she gets, and away she goes, and withall, enquired where this *Jesus* the Preacher dined that day? And one told her, at the house of *Simon the Pharisee*. So away goes she, first to her Chamber, and there strips her self of her wanton Attire; then falls upon her knees to ask God forgiveness for all her wicked life. This done, in a modest dress she goes to *Simon*'s house, where she finds *Jesus* set at Dinner. So she gets behind him, and weeps, and drops her tears upon his Feet like Rain, and washes them, and wipes them with the Hairs of her Head. She also kissed his Feet with her Lips, and anointed them with Oyntment. When *Simon* the Pharisee perceived what the Woman did, and being ignorant of what it was to be forgiven much (for he never was forgiven more than Fifty Pence) He began,

gan to think within himself, that he had been mistaken about *Jesus Christ*, because he suffered such a Sinner as this Woman was, to touch him. Surely, quoth he, this Man, if he were a Prophet, would not let this Woman come near him, for she is a Town Sinner, (so ignorant are all Self-righteous men of the way of *Christ* with Sinners.) But lest *Mary* should be discouraged with some clownish carriage of this *Pharisee*, and so desert her good beginnings, and her new steps which she now had began to take towards eternal Life, *Jesus* began thus with *Simon*. *Simon*, saith he, *I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was*, said Jesus, *a certain Creditor had two Debtors, the one owed him Five hundred pence, and the other, Fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the Woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this Woman? I entred into thy house, thou gavest me no Water for my Feet: But she hath washed my Feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.*

Thou

Thou gaveſt me no kiſs, but this Woman, ſince the time I came in, hath not ceaſed to kiſs my Feet. My Head with Oyl thou didſt not anoint, but this Woman hath anointed my Feet with Oyntment. Wherefore I ſay unto thee, Her Sins which are many, are forgiven, for ſhe loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the ſame loveth little. And he ſaid unto her, thy Sins are forgiven, Luk. 7. 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50.

Thus you have the Story. If I come ſhort in any Circumſtance, I beg Pardon of thoſe that can correct me. 'Tis three or four and twenty Years ſince I ſaw the Book, yet I have as far as my memory will admit, given you the relation of the Matter. However, *Luke*, as you ſee, doth here preſent you with the Subſtance of the whole.

Alas! *Chriſt Jeſus* has but little thanks for the ſaving of little Sinners. *To whom little is forgiven, the ſame loveth little.* He gets not Water for his Feet, by his ſaving of ſuch Sinners. There are abundance of dry-eyed Chriſtians in the World, and abundance of dry-eyed Duties too: Duties that never was wetted with the tears of Contrition and Repentance, nor ever ſweetned with the

the great Sinners box of Oyntment. And the reaſon is, ſuch ſinners have not *great* ſins to be ſaved from; or if they have, they look upon them in the *diminiſhing-glaſs* of the Holy Law of God. But I rather believe that the Profeſſors of our days want a due ſenſe of what they are; for verily, for the generality of them, both before and ſince Converſion, they have been ſinners of a luſty ſize: But if their Eyes be holden, if Convictions are not ſhown, if their knowledge of their ſins is but like to the eye-ſight in twi-light, the Heart cannot be affected with that grace that has laid hold on the man, and ſo *Chriſt Jeſus* ſows much, and has little coming in.

Wherefore His way is oft times to ſtep out of his way, to *Jerico*, to *Samaria*, to the Countrey of the *Gaddarens*, to the Coaſts of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and alſo to Mount *Calvary*, that he may lay hold of ſuch kind of Sinners as will love him to his liking. *Luke* 19. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. *John* 4. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, *&c.* *Mark* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. *Matt.* 15. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 *Luke* 23. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.

But

But thus much for the Sixth Reason, why *Christ Jesus* would have Mercy offered in the first place to the biggest Sinners; to wit, because such sinners when converted, are apt to love him most. The *Jerusalem-sinners* were they that out-stript, when they were Converted, in some things, all the Churches of the *Gentiles*. *They were of one heart, and of one soul, neither said any of them, that ought of the things that they possessed was their own; neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of Lands, or Houses, sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles feet*, &c. *Acts* 4. 32, 33, 34, 35. Now show me such another Patern if you can. But why did these do thus? Oh! they were *Jerusalem-sinners*. These were the Men that but a little before, had killed the Prince of Life, and those to whom he did, that notwithstanding, send the first offer of Grace and Mercy. And the sense of this, took them up betwixt the Earth and the Heavens, and carried them on in such ways and methods, as could never be trodden by any since. They talk of the Church of *Rome*, and set her in her Primitive state, as a Patern, and Mother

Mother of Churches; when the Truth is, they were the *Jerusalem-sinners*, when Converts, that out-did all the Churches that ever was.

Seventhly, *Christ Jesus* would have Mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, because *Grace*, *when it is received by such, finds matter to kindle upon more freely than it finds in other sinners.* Great Sinners are like the *dry Wood*, or like *great Candles*, which burns best and shines with biggest light. I lay not this down, as I did those Reasons before, to shew, that when great Sinners are Converted, they will be encouragement to others, though that is true; but to shew that *Christ* has a delight to see Grace, the Grace we receive, *to shine.* We love to see things that bear a good gloss, yea, we chuse to buy such kind of matter to work upon, as will, if wrought up to what we intend, cast that lustre that we desire. Candles that burn not bright, we like not; Wood that is green will rather smother and *sputter* and *smoak*, and *crack*, and *flounce*, than cast a brave light and pleasant heat. Wherefore great Folks care not much, not so much for such kind of things, as for them that will better answer their ends.

Hence

Hence *Christ* desires the biggest Sinner, in him there is Matter to work by, to wit, a great deal of sin; for as by the Tallow of the Candle, the Fire takes occasion to burn the brighter; so by the sin of the Soul, Grace takes occasion to shine the clearer. Little Candles shine but little, for there wanteth matter for the Fire to work upon; but in the great Sinner, here is more matter for Grace to work by. Faith shines, when it worketh towards *Christ*, through the sides of many and great Transgressions; and so does Love, for that much is forgiven. And what matter can be found in the Soul for Humility to work by, so well, as by a sight that I have been and am an abominable Sinner? And the same is to be said of Patience, Meekness, Gentleness, Self-denial, or of any other Grace. Grace takes occasion by the vileness of the man, to shine the more; even as by the ruggedness of a very strong Distemper, or Disease, the vertue of the Medicine is best made manifest. *Where Sin abounds, Grace much more abounds*, *Rom.* 5 20. A black string makes the Neck look whiter; great sins makes Grace burn clear. Some say when Grace and a good Nature meet together, they do

do make ſhining Chriſtians; but I ſay, when Grace and a great Sinner meets, and when Grace ſhall ſubdue that great Sinner to it ſelf, and ſhall operate after its kind in the Soul of that great Sinner, then we have a ſhining Chriſtian; Witneſs all thoſe of whom mention was made before.

Abraham was among the Idolaters when in the Land of *Aſſyria*, and ſerved Idols with his Kindred on the other ſide of the Flood, *Joſ.* 24. 2. *Gen.* 11. 31. but who when called, was there in the World, in whom Grace ſhone ſo bright as in him?

The *Theſſalonians* were Idolaters, before the Word of God came to them; but when they had received it, they became *examples* to all that did believe, in *Macedonia* and *Achaia*, 1 *Theſſ.* 1. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

God the Father, and *Jeſus Chriſt* his Son, are for having things ſeen, for having the Word of Life held forth. They light not a Candle that it might be put under a Buſhel, or under a Bed, but on a Candleſtick, that all that come in may ſee the light, *Mat.* 5. 15. *Mar.* 4. 21. *Luk.* 8. 16. *chap.* 11. 33.

And,

And, I ſay, as I ſaid before, in whom is it like ſo to ſhine, as in the Souls of great ſinners?

When the *Jewiſh Phariſees* dallied with the Goſpel, *Chriſt* threatned to take it from them, and to give it to the barbarous *Heathens*, and *Idolaters*. Why ſo? For they, ſaith he, will bring forth the Fruits thereof in their ſeaſon. *Therefore I ſay unto you, The Kingdom of God ſhall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* *Matt.* 21. 41, 43.

I have often marvelled at our Youth, and ſaid in my heart, What ſhould be the reaſon that they ſhould be ſo generally at this day debauched as they are! for they are now Profane to amazement: And ſometimes I have thought one thing, and ſometimes another: That is, why God ſhould ſuffer it ſo to be. At laſt I have thought of this: How if the God whoſe ways are paſt finding out, ſhould ſuffer it ſo to be now, that he might make of ſome of them the more glorious Saints hereafter. I know Sin is of the Devil, but it cannot work in the world without permiſſion: and if it happens to be as I have thought, it will not be the firſt time that God the Lord hath

hath caught Satan in his own design. For my part, I believe that the time is at hand, that we shall see better Saints in the World, than has been seen in it this many a day. And this Vileness that at present does so much swallow up our Youth, is one cause of my thinking so: For out of them, for from among them, when God sets to his Hand, as of old, you shall see what penitent ones, what trembling ones, and what admirers of Grace, will be found to profess the Gospel, to the glory of God by Christ.

Alas! We are a company of worn-out Christians, our *Moon* is in the *Wane*; we are much more black than white, more dark than light; we shine but a little; Grace in the most of us, is decayed. But I say, when they of these *debauched* ones that are to be saved, shall be brought in; when these that look more like Devils than Men shall be Converted to *Christ*, (and I believe several of them will) then will *Christ* be exalted, Grace adored, the Word prized, *Sions* Paths better trodden, and Men in the pursuite of their own Salvation, to the amazement of them that are left behind.

Just before *Christ* came in the Flesh the World was Degenerated as it is now: The generality of the Men in *Jerusalem* were become either high and famous for Hypocrisy, or filthy base in their Lives. The Devil also was broke loose in hideous manner, and had taken possession of many: Yea, I believe that there was never Generation before nor since, that could produce so many possessed with Devils, deformed, lame, blind, and infected with monstrous Diseases, as that Generation could. But what was the reason thereof? I mean the reason from God? Why one (and we may sum up more in that answer that *Christ* gave to his Disciples concerning him that was born Blind) was, that the Works of God might be made manifest in them, and that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, *Joh.*9.2,3. *chap.*11.4.

Now if these Devils and Diseases, as they possessed Men then, were to make way and work for an approaching *Christ* in Person, and for the declaring of his Power, why may we not think that now, even now also, he is ready to come by his Spirit in the Gospel, to heal many of the Debaucheries of our Age? I cannot believe that Grace will take them all,

for

for there are but few that are ſaved: But yet it will take ſome, even ſome of the worſt of Men, and make Bleſſed ones of them. But O! how theſe *Ringleaders* in Vice, will then ſhine in Vertue! They will be the very Pillars in Churches, they will be as an Enſign in the Land; *The Lord their God ſhall ſave them in that day, as the Flock of his People, for they ſhall be as the Stones of a Crown, lift up as an Enſign upon the Land*, Zech 9. 16. But who are theſe? Even Idolatrous *Ephraim*, and backſliding *Judah*, Ver. 13.

I know there is ground to fear, that the Iniquity of this Generation will be purſued with heavy Judgments: But that will not hinder what we have ſuppoſed: God took him a glorious Church out of Bloody *Jeruſalem*, yea, out of the chief of the Sinners there, and left the reſt to be taken and ſpoiled, and ſold Thirty for a Penny, in the Nations where they were Captives. The Goſpel working gloriouſly in a place, to the ſeizing upon many of the *ringleading* Sinners thereof, promiſeth no ſecurity to the reſt, but rather threatneth them with the heavieſt and ſmarteſt Judgments; as in the Inſtance now given, we have a full demonſtration; but in

defending, the Lord will defend his People; and in saving, he will save his Inheritance.

Nor does this speak any great comfort to a decayed and backsliding sort of Christians, for the next time God rides Post with his Gospel, he will leave such Christians behind him. But I say, *Christ* is resolved to set up his Light in the World; yea, he is delighted to see his Graces shine, and therefore he commands that his Gospel should to that end, be offered in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners; for by great Sins it shineth most: Therefore he saith, *Begin at Jerusalem.*

Eightly, And lastly, *Christ Jesus* will have Mercy to be offerd in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners, *For that by that means the Impenitent that are left behind, will be at the Judgment, the more left without excuse.*

God's Word has two edges, it can cut back-stroke and fore-stroke. If it doth thee no good, it will do thee hurt; 'Tis the savour of Life unto Life to those that receive it, but of Death unto Death to them that refuse it, 2 *Cor.* 2. 15, 16. But this is not all, the tender of Grace to the biggest Sinners, in the

first

first place, will not only leave the rest, or those that refuse it, in a deplorable condition, but will also stop their mouths, and cut off all pretence to excuse at that day. *If I had not come and spoken unto them*, saith Christ, *they had not had Sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin*, for their sin of persevering in Impenitence, *Joh.* 15. 22.

But what did he speak to them? Why even that which I have told you; to wit, That he has in special, a delight in saving the biggest Sinners. He spake this in the way of his Doctrine, he spake this in the way of his Practice, even to the pouring out of his last breath before them, *Luk.* 23. 34.

Now since this is so, what can the Condemned at the Judgment say for themselves, why Sentence of Death should not be passed upon them? I say, what excuse can they make for themselves, when they shall be asked why they did not in the day of Salvation come to *Christ* to be saved? Will they have ground to say to the Lord, Thou wast only for saving of little Sinners, and therefore because they were great ones, they durst not come unto him; Or that thou hadst not compassion for the biggest Sinners,

therefore I died in deſpair; will theſe be excuſes for them as the Caſe now ſtandeth with them? Is there not every where in God's Book a flat contradiction to this, in multitudes of Promiſes, of Invitations, of Examples, and the like? Alas, alas! there will then be there millions of *Souls* to confute this Plea; ready I ſay, to ſtand up and ſay, O! deceived World, *Heaven ſwarms with ſuch, as was, when they were in the World, to the full as bad as you.*

Now this will kill all plea or excuſe, why they ſhould not periſh in their ſins; yea, the Text ſays, they ſhall *ſee* them there; *There ſhall be weeping, when you ſhall ſee Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of Heaven, and you your ſelves thruſt out. And they ſhall come from the Eaſt, and from the Weſt, and from the North, and from the South, and ſhall ſit down in the Kingdom of God*, Luk. 13. 28, 29. Out of which company it is eaſie to pick ſuch, as ſometimes were as bad People as any now breathe on the face of the Earth. What think you of the firſt Man, by whoſe ſins there are millions now in Hell? And ſo I may ſay, what think you of ten thouſand more beſides?

But

But if the Word will not rifle and gagg them up, I speak now for amplification sake, the view of those who are saved shall.

There comes an *Incestuous* Person to the Barr, and pleads that the bigness of his Sins was a bar to his receiving the Promise; But will not his mouth be stopt as to that, when *Lot* and the Incestuous *Corinthian* shall be set before him, *Gen.* 19. 33, 34, 35, 36. 1 *Cor.* 5. 1, 2.

There comes a Thief and says, *Lord! my sin of Theft, I thought, was such as could not be pardoned by thee!* But when he shall see the Thief that was saved on the Cross, stand by, as clothed with beauteous Glory, what further can he be able to object? Yea, the Lord will produce ten thousand of his Saints at his coming, who shall after this manner execute Judgment upon all, *and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him*, Jude 14, 16. And these are hard speeches against him, To say that he was not able or willing to save Men, because of the greatness of their sins, or to say that they were discouraged by his Word from Repentance, because of the heinousness of their offences.

These things, I say, shall then be confuted; He comes with ten thousand of his Saints to confute them, and to stop their mouths from making objections against their own eternal damnation.

Here is *Adam* the destroyer of the World; here is *Lot* that *lay with both his Daughters*; here is *Abraham* that was sometimes an *Idolater*, and *Jacob* that was a *Supplanter*, and *Ruben* that *lay with his Fathers Concubine*, and *Judah* that *lay with his Daughter-in-Law*, and *Levy* and *Simeon* that *wickedly slew the Sechemites*; and *Aaron* that made an Idol to be Worshipped, and that proclaimed a Religious Feast unto it. Here is also *Rahab* the Harlot, and *Bathsheba* that bare a Bastard to *David*. Here is *Solomon* that great Backslider, and *Manasseth* that man of Blood, and a Witch. Time would fail to tell you of the Woman of *Canaans* Daughter, of *Mary Magdalen*, of *Matthew* the Publican, and of *Gideon* and *Sampson*, and many thousands more.

Alas, alas! I say, what will these Sinners do, that have, through their unbelief, eclipsed the glorious largeness of the mercy of God, and gave way to despair of Salvation because of the bigness of their sins. For

For all these, though now glorious Saints in Light, were sometimes Sinners of the biggest size, who had sins that were of a notorious hue; Yet now, I say, they are in their shining and heavenly Robes before the Throne of God and of the Lamb, Blessing for ever and ever, that Son of God for their Salvation, who dyed for them upon the Tree; admiring that ever it should come into their Hearts once to think of coming to God by Christ: But above all, blessing God for granting of them light to see those incouragements in his Testament; without which, without doubt, they had been daunted and sunk down under guilt of Sin and Despair, as their fellow-sinners have done.

But now they also are all Witnesses for God and for his Grace against an unbelieving World; for as I said, they shall come to *convince* the World of their Speeches, their hard and unbelieving words, that they have spoken concerning the mercy of God, and the merits of the Passion of his blessed Son *Jesus Christ*.

But will it not, think you, strangely put to silence all such thoughts, and words, and reasonings of the Ungodly

before the barr of God? doubtleſs it will; yea, and will ſend them away from his preſence alſo, with the greateſt guilt that poſſibly can faſten upon the Conſciences of Men.

For what will ſting like this? I have through mine own fooliſh, narrow, unworthy, undervaluing thoughts of the love and ability of *Chriſt* to ſave me, brought my ſelf to everlaſting ruine. 'Tis true, I was a horrible ſinner, not one in a hundred did live ſo vile a life as I, but this ſhould not have kept me from cloſing with *Jeſus Chriſt*: I ſee now that there are abundance in Glory that once were as bad as I have been, but they were ſaved by Faith, and I am damned by Unbelief.

Wretch that I am! why did not I give glory to the Redeeming Blood of *Jeſus?* Why did I not humbly caſt my Soul at his bleſſed foot-ſtool for Mercy? Why did I judge of his ability to ſave me by the voice of my ſhallow reaſon, and the voice of a guilty Conſcience? Why betook not I my ſelf to the holy Word of God? Why did I not read and pray that I might underſtand, ſince now I perceive that God ſaid then, *He giveth liberally*

liberally to them that pray, and upbraided not, Jam. 1. 5.

'Tis rational to think, that by ſuch Cogitations as theſe, the unbelieving World will be torn in pieces before the Judgment of *Chriſt*: Eſpecially thoſe that have lived where they *did* or *might* have heard the Goſpel of the Grace of God. Oh! that ſaying, *It ſhall be more tolerable for Sodom at the Judgment, than for them*, will be better underſtood. See *Luk.* 10. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

This Reaſon therefore ſtandeth faſt; Namely, That *Chriſt*, by offering mercy in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners, now, *will ſtop all mouths of the impenitent at the day of Judgment*, and cut off all excuſe that ſhall be attempted to be made (from the thoughts of the greatneſs of their ſins) why they came not to him.

I have often thought of the day of Judgment, and how God will deal with ſinners at that day: And I believe it will be managed with that ſweetneſs, with that equitableneſs, with that excellent Righteouſneſs, as to every ſin, and circumſtance, and agravation thereof that men that are damned, before th

Judgment is over, shall receive such conviction of the righteous Judgment of God upon them, and of their deserts of Hell-fire, that they shall in themselves, conclude that there is all the reason in the world that they should be shut out of Heaven, and go to Hell-fire; *These shall go away into everlasting fire*, Matt. 25. 46.

Only this will tare, That they have mist of Mercy and Glory, and obtained everlasting damnation through their unbelief. But it will tare but *themselves*, but their *own* Souls; they will gnash upon *themselves*: For in that, Mercy was offered to the chief of them in the *first place*, and yet they were damned for rejecting of it: They were damned for forsaking what they had a propriety in; for, forsaking their *Own* Mercy.

And thus much for the Reasons. I will conclude with a word of Application.

The APPLICATION.

First, Would *Jesus Christ* have Mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggest sinners? *Then this shews us how to make*

make a right judgment of the heart of Chriſt to Men. Indeed we have advantage to gueſs at the goodneſs of his Heart, by many things; as by his taking our nature upon him, his dying for us, his ſending his Word and Miniſters to us; and all that we might be ſaved. But this of *beginning to offer mercy to Jeruſalem*, is that which heightens all the reſt; for this doth not only confirm to us, that Love was the cauſe of his dying for us, but it ſhews us yet more the depth of that Love: He might have dyed for us, and yet have extended the benefit of his death to a few, as one might call them, of the beſt-conditioned ſinners, to thoſe who (though they were weak, and ſo could not but ſin) yet made not a trade of ſinning; To thoſe that ſinned not laviſhingly. There are in the World, as one may call them, the moderate Sinners; the ſinners that mix Righteouſneſs with their Polutions; the ſinners that, though they be ſinners, do what on their part lies, (ſome that are blind would think ſo) that they might be ſaved. I ſay, it had been Love, great Love, if he had dyed for none but ſuch, and ſent his love to ſuch: But

that

that he should send out *conditions of Peace* to the biggest of Sinners! yea, that they should be offered to them first of all! (for so he means when he says, *Begin at Jerusalem*) This is wonderful! this shows his heart to purpose, as also the heart of God his Father who sent him to do thus.

There is nothing more incident to Men that are awake in their Souls, than to have wrong thoughts of God; Thoughts that are narrow, and that pinch and pen up his Mercy to scanty and beggarly conclusions, and ridged legal conditions; supposing that it is rude and an intrenching upon his Majesty, to come our selves, or to invite others, until we have scraped and washed, and rubbed off as much of our dirt from us as we think is convenient, to make us somewhat orderly and handsome in his sight. Such never knew what these Words meant, *Begin at Jerusalem.* Yea, such in their hearts have compared the Father and his Son to niggardly rich Men, whose Money comes from them like drops of blood. True, says such, God has Mercy, but he is loth to part with it. You must please him well, if you get any from him:

He

He is not ſo free as many ſuppoſe, nor is he ſo willing to ſave as ſome pretended Goſpellers imagine: But I ask ſuch, If the Father and Son be not unſpeakably free to ſhew Mercy, why was *this* Clauſe put into our Commiſſion to preach the Goſpel? Yea, why did he ſay, *Begin at Jeruſalem?* For when men, through the weakneſs of their wits, have attempted to ſhew other reaſons why *they* ſhould have the firſt proffer of Mercy, yet I can prove (by many undeniable Reaſons) that they of *Jeruſalem* (to whom the Apoſtles made the *Firſt* offer, according as they were commanded) were the biggeſt Sinners that ever did breathe upon the face of God's earth (ſet the unpardonable ſin aſide) upon which my Doctrine ſtands like a Rock, That *Jeſus* the Son of God would have Mercy in the firſt place offered to the biggeſt Sinners: And if this doth not ſhew the heart of the Father and the Son to be infinitely free in beſtowing forgiveneſs of Sins, I confeſs my ſelf miſtaken.

Neither is there, ſet this aſide, another Argument like it, to ſhew us the willingneſs of *Chriſt* to ſave Sinners: For, as was ſaid before, all the reſt of the

the ſigns of *Chriſt*'s mercifulneſs might have been limitted to Sinners that are ſo and ſo qualified; but when he ſays, *Begin at Jeruſalem*, the Line is ſtretched out to the utmoſt, no man can imagine beyond it, and it is folly here to pinch and pare, to narrow, and ſeek to bring it within ſcanty bounds, for he plainly ſaith, *Begin at Jeruſalem.* The biggeſt Sinner, is the biggeſt Sinner; the *biggeſt* is the *Jeruſalem-ſinner.*

'Tis true, he ſaith that *Repentance and Remiſſion of ſins muſt go together*; but yet Remiſſion is ſent to the chief, the *Jeruſalem-ſinner*; nor doth Repentance leſſen at all the *Jeruſalem-ſinners crimes*; it diminiſheth none of his ſins, nor cauſes that there ſhould be ſo much as half a one the fewer: It only puts a ſtop to the *Jeruſalem-ſinners* courſe, and makes him willing to be ſaved freely by Grace; and for time to come to be governed by that bleſſed Word that has brought the Tidings of good things to him.

Beſides, no man ſhews himſelf willing to be ſaved that repenteth not of his deeds, for he that goes on ſtill in his treſpaſſes, declares that he is reſolved to purſue his own damnation further.

Learn

Learn then to judge of the largeneſs of God's heart, and of the heart of his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, by the Word: Judge not thereof by feeling nor by the reports of thy Conſcience; Conſcience is oft-times here befooled and made to go quite beſides the Word: 'Twas judging without the Word that made *David* ſay, *I am caſt off from God's eyes, and ſhall periſh one day by the hand of Saul*, Pſal. 31. 22. 1 Sam. 27. 1.

The Word had told him another thing; namely, that he ſhould be King in his ſtead. Our Text ſays alſo, that *Jeſus Chriſt* bids Preachers in their preaching Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins, *Begin firſt at Jeruſalem*; Thereby declaring moſt truely, the infinite largeneſs of the merciful heart of God and his Son, to the ſinful Children of Men.

Judge thou, I ſay, therefore of the goodneſs of the heart of God and his Son, by this Text, and by others of the ſame import; ſo ſhalt thou not diſhonour the grace of God, nor needleſly fright thy ſelf, nor give away thy Faith, nor gratifie the Devil, nor loſe the benefit of his Word: I ſpeak now to weak Believers.

Secondly,

Secondly, Would *Jesus Christ* have Mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggeſt Sinners, *to the Jeruſalem-ſinners? Then by this alſo, you muſt learn to judge of the ſufficiency of the merits of Chriſt*; not that the Merits of *Chriſt* can be *comprehended*, for that they are beyond the Conceptions of the whole World, being called *The unſearchable riches of Chriſt*; but yet they may be *apprehended* to a conſiderable degree. Now the way to apprehend them moſt, is to conſider what offers, after his Reſurrection, he makes of his Grace to Sinners; for to be ſure he will not offer beyond the vertue of his Merits; becauſe as Grace is the cauſe of his Merits, ſo his Merits are the baſis and bounds, upon and by which his Grace ſtands good, and is let out to Sinners. Doth he then command that his Mercy ſhould be offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners? It declares that there is a ſufficiency in his Blood to ſave the biggeſt Sinners. The Blood of *Jeſus Chriſt* cleanſeth from all Sin. And again, *Be it known unto you Men and Brethren, That through this Man* (this Man's Merits) *is preached to you the forgiveneſs of Sins, and by him All that believe are juſtified from All things from which*

which they could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes, Acts 13. 38.

Obſerve then thy Rule to make Judgement of the Sufficiency of the bleſſed Merits of thy Saviour; if he had not been able to have reconciled the biggeſt Sinners to his Father by his Blood, he would not have ſent to them; have ſent to them in the *firſt place* the Doctrine of Remiſſion of Sins; for Remiſſion of Sins is through Faith in his Blood: We are juſtified freely by the Grace of God, through the Redemption that is in the Blood of *Chriſt*. Upon the ſquare, as I may call it, of the worthineſs of the Blood of *Chriſt*, Grace Acts, and offers Forgiveneſs of Sin to Men, *Epheſ.* 1. 7. *chap.* 2. 13, 14. *Coloſ.* 1. 20, 21, 22.

Hence therefore we muſt gather, That the Blood of *Chriſt* is of infinite value, for that he offereth Mercy to the biggeſt of Sinners: Nay further, ſince he offereth Mercy in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners; Conſidering alſo that this firſt act of his, is that which the World will take notice of, and expect it ſhould be continued unto the end; Alſo it is a diſparagement to a Man that ſeeks his own Glory in what he undertakes, to do that for a ſpirt, which he cannot

cannot continue and hold out in: This is our Lord's own Argument, *He began to build*, saith he, *but was not able to finish*, *Luk.* 14. 28, 29, 30.

Shouldest thou hear a Man say, I am resolved to be kind to the Poor, and should begin giving with handfuls of *Guinea's*, you would conclude that either he is wonderful rich, or must straighten his hand, or will soon be at the bottom of his Riches. Why this is the Case, *Christ* at his Resurrection gave it out that he would be good to the World; and first sends to the biggest Sinners, with an intent to have Mercy on them. Now the biggest Sinners cannot be saved but by abundance of Grace, 'tis not a little that will save great sinners, *Rom.* 5. 17. And I say again, since the Lord *Jesus* mounts thus high at the first, and sends to the *Jerusalem-sinners*, that they may come first to partake of his Mercy; it follows that either he has unsearchable riches of Grace and Worth in himself, or else he must straighten his hand, or his Grace and Merits will be spent before the World's at an end. But let it be believed, as surely as spoken, he is still as full as ever! He is not a jot the poorer for all the Forgivenesses that he has

has given away to great Sinners; Alſo he is ſtill as free as at firſt, for he never yet called back this Word, *Begin at the Jeruſalem-ſinners.* And as I ſaid, ſince his Grace is extended according to the worth of his Merits; I conclude, that there is the ſame vertue in his Merits to ſave now, as there was at the very beginning.

O the Riches of the Grace of *Chriſt!* Oh the riches of the Blood of *Chriſt!*

Thirdly, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners, *Then here is encouragement for you that think, for wicked hearts and lives, you have not your fellows in the World*; yet to come to him.

There is a People that therefore fear leſt they ſhould be rejected of *Jeſus Chriſt*, becauſe of the greatneſs of their ſins; when as you ſee here, ſuch are ſent to, ſent to by *Jeſus Chriſt* to come to him for Mercy; *Begin at Jeruſalem:* Never did one thing anſwer another more fitly in this world, than this Text fitteth ſuch kind of ſinners: As Face anſwereth Face in a Glaſs, ſo this Text anſwereth the neceſſities of ſuch ſinners. What can a Man ſay more, but that he ſtands in the rank of the biggeſt ſinners; let

let him ſtretch himſelf whither he can, and think of himſelf to the utmoſt, he can but conclude himſelf to be one of the biggeſt ſinners: And what then? Why the Text meets him in the very face, and ſaith, *Chriſt* offereth Mercy to the biggeſt ſinners, to the very *Jeruſalem ſinners*. What more can be objected? Nay, he doth not only offer to ſuch his Mercy, but to them 'tis commanded to be offered in the *firſt place*; *Begin at Jeruſalem*. Preach Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins among all Nations, *beginning at Jeruſalem*. Is not here incouragement for thoſe that think, *for wicked Hearts and Lives, they have not their fellows in the world?*

Objection, *But I have a Heart as hard as a Rock.*

Anſw. Well, but this doth but prove thee a biggeſt ſinner.

Object. *But my Heart continually frets againſt the Lord?*

Anſ. Well, this doth but prove thee a biggeſt ſinner.

Object. *But I have been deſperate in ſinful courſes?*

Anſ. Well, ſtand thou with the number of the biggeſt ſinners.

Object.

Object. *But my grey Head is found in the way of wickedneſs?*

Anſ. Well, thou art in the rank of the biggeſt ſinners.

Object. *But I have not only a baſe Heart, but I have lived a debauched life?*

Anſ. Stand thou alſo among thoſe that are called the biggeſt ſinners. And what then? Why the Text *ſwoops* you all; you cannot object your ſelves beyond the Text: It has a particular meſſage to the *biggeſt ſinners*. I ſay, it *ſwoops* you all.

Object. *But I am a Reprobate?*

Anſ. Now thou talkeſt like a fool, and medleſt with what thou underſtandeſt not: No ſin, but *the ſin of final Impenitence*, can prove a Man a Reprobate. And I am ſure thou haſt not arrived as yet unto that: Therefore thou underſtandeſt not what thou ſayeſt, and makeſt groundleſs concluſions againſt thy ſelf. Say thou art a Sinner, and I will hold with thee. Say thou art a great ſinner, and I will ſay ſo too. Yea, ſay thou art one of the biggeſt ſinners and ſpare not, for the Text yet is beyond thee, is yet betwixt Hell and thee; *Begin at Jeruſalem*, has yet a ſmile upon thee: And thou talkeſt as if thou waſt a Reprobate, and that the greatneſs of thy ſins do

prove

prove thee ſo to be; when yet they of *Jeruſalem* were not ſuch, whoſe ſins I dare ſay, were ſuch, both for bigneſs and heinouſneſs, as thou art not capable of committing beyond them; unleſs now, after thou haſt received Conviction that the Lord *Jeſus* is the only Saviour of the World, thou ſhouldeſt wickedly and deſpitefully turn thy ſelf from him, and conclude he is not to be truſted to for Life, and ſo crucifie him for a Cheat afreſh. This I muſt confeſs, will bring a Man under the *Black rod*, and ſet him in danger of eternal Damnation, *Heb.* 6 6. *chap.* 10. 29. This is trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting his Blood an unholy thing. *This did they of Jeruſalem*, but they did it ignorantly in Unbelief, and ſo were yet capable of Mercy: But to do this againſt profeſſed Light, and to ſtand to it, puts a man beyond the Text indeed, *Acts* 3. 14, 15, 16, 17. 1 *Tim.* 1. 13.

But I ſay, what is this to him, that would fain be ſaved by *Chriſt?* His ſins did, as to greatneſs, never yet reach to the nature of the ſins that the ſinners intended by the Text, had made themſelves guilty of. He that would be ſaved by Chriſt, has an honourable eſteem of him, but

but they of *Jerusalem* preferred a Murderer before him; but as for him, they cried, away away with him, 'tis not fit that he should live. Perhaps thou wilt object, *That thy self hast a thousand times preferred a stinking Lust before him.* I answer. Be it so, it is but what is common to Men to do; nor doth the Lord *Jesus* make such a foolish Life a *Barr* to thee, to forbid thy coming to him, or a *Bound* to his Grace, that it might be kept from thee; but admits of thy Repentance, and offereth himself unto thee freely, as thou standest among the *Jerusalem-sinners.*

Take therefore incouragement, Man; Mercy is, by the Text, held forth to the biggest sinners. Yea, put thy self into the number of the worst by reckoning, that thou mayest be one of the first, and mayst not be put off till the biggest sinners are served: For the biggest sinners are first *invited*; consequently, if they come, they are like to be the first that shall be *served.* 'Twas so with *Jerusalem*; *Jerusalem-sinners* were they that were first *invited*, and those of them that came first, (and there came three thousand of them the first day they were invited, (how many came afterwards,

none can tell) *they were first ſerved.*

Put in thy Name, Man, among the *biggeſt*, leſt thou art made to wait till *they are ſerved.* You have ſome men that think themſelves very cunning, becauſe they put up their Names in their Prayers among them that feign it, ſaying, *God, I thank thee, I am not ſo bad as the worſt*; but believe it, if they be ſaved at all, they ſhall be ſaved in the laſt place. The firſt in their own eyes ſhall be *ſerved* laſt, and the laſt, or worſt, ſhall be firſt. The Text inſinuates it, *Begin at Jeruſalem*; and Reaſon backs it, for they have moſt need. Behold ye therefore, how God's ways are above ours; we are for *ſerving* the worſt laſt, God is for *ſerving* the worſt firſt. The Man at the Pool, that to my thinking, was longeſt in his Diſeaſe, and moſt helpleſs as to his Cure, was firſt healed, yea, he only was healed; for we read that *Chriſt* healed him, but we read not then that he healed one more there, *Joh* 5.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9.

Wherefore if thou wouldſt ſooneſt be *ſerved*, put in thy Name among the very worſt of ſinners. Say, when thou art upon thy knees, Lord! *here is a Jeruſalem ſinner!* a ſinner of the biggeſt ſize! one whoſe burden is of the greateſt bulk

and

and heavieſt weight! one that cannot ſtand long without ſinking into Hell, without thy ſupporting hand! *Be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my ſtrength, haſte thou to help me.*

I ſay, put in thy Name with *Magdalen*, with *Manaſſeh*, that thou mayeſt fare as the *Magdalen* and the *Manaſſeh-ſinners* do. The Man in the Goſpel made the deſperate condition of his Child, an argument with *Chriſt* to haſte his Cure: *Sir, Come down*, ſaith he, *ere my Child die*, Joh. 4. 49. And *Chriſt* regarded his haſte, ſaying, *Go thy way, thy Son liveth*, Ver. 50. *Haſte* requires *haſte*. *David* was for ſpeed; Deliver me ſpeedily; hear me ſpeedily, anſwer me ſpeedily, *Pſal.* 31. 2. *Pſal.* 69. 17. *Pſal.* 102. 2. But why ſpeedily? I am in the *Net*, I am in *trouble*, my days *conſume* like ſmoke, *Pſal.* 31. 4. *Pſal.* 69. 17. *Pſal.* 102. 3. Deep calleth unto deep, neceſſity calls for *help*; *great* neceſſity for *preſent* help.

Wherefore I ſay, be ruled by me in this matter; feign not thy ſelf another Man, if *thou haſt been a filthy ſinner*, but go *in thy colours* to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and put thy ſelf among the moſt Vile, and let him alone to *put thee among the Children*,

Jer. 3. 19. Confeſs all that thou knoweſt of thy ſelf; I know thou wilt find it hard work to do thus; eſpecially if thy mind be legal; but do it, *leſt thou ſtay*, and be *deferred* with the little ſinners, *until the great ones have had their alms.* What do you think *David* intended when he ſaid, his Wounds ſtunck and were corrupted, *but to haſten God to have mercy upon him, and not to defer his Cure. Lord*, ſays he, *I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long. I am feeble, and ſore broken by reaſon of the diſquietment of my heart*, Pſal. 38. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

David knew what he did by all this, he knew that his making the worſt of his Caſe, was the way to ſpeedy help, and that a feigning and diſſembling the matter with God, was the next way to a demurr, as to his Forgiveneſs.

I have one thing more to offer for thy encouragement who *deemeſt* thy ſelf one of the biggeſt ſinners; And that is, Thou art as it were, called by thy Name, in the *firſt place*, to come in for Mercy. Thou *Man of Jeruſalem*, hearken to thy Call; Men do ſo in Courts of Judicature, and preſently cry out, *Here, Sir*; and then they ſhoulder and croud, and ſay,

Pray

Pray give way, I am called into the Court. Why, this is thy Caſe, thou great, thou *Jeruſalem ſinner*, be of good chear, he calleth thee, *Mark* 10. 46, 47, 48, 49. Why ſitteſt thou ſtill? ariſe; why ſtandeſt thou ſtill? Come, Man. Thy *Call* ſhould give thee *authority* to come. *Begin at Jeruſalem*, is thy call and authority to come; Wherefore up, and ſhoulder it, Man: Say, *Stand away Devil*, *Chriſt* calls me, *ſtand away Unbelief*, Chriſt calls me: Stand away all ye my diſcouraging Apprehenſions, for my Saviour calls me to him to receive of his Mercy. Men will do thus, as I ſaid, in Courts below; and why ſhouldſt not thou approach thus to the Court above. The *Jeruſalem-ſinner* is firſt in *Thought*, firſt in *Commiſſion*, firſt in the *Record* of Names, and therefore ſhould give attendance with expectation, that he is firſt to receive Mercy of God.

Is not this an incouragement to the biggeſt ſinners to make their Application to *Chriſt* for Mercy? *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, doth alſo confirm this thing, that is, that the *biggeſt ſinner*, and he that has the biggeſt burden, is he who is firſt invited. *Chriſt pointeth over the Heads of thouſands*, as he

ſits on the Throne of Grace, directly to ſuch a Man; and ſays, Bring in hither the *maimed*, the *halt*, and the *blind*; Let the *Jeruſalem-ſinner* that ſtands there behind, come to me. Wherefore ſince *Chriſt* ſays come, to thee, let the Angels make a *lane*, and let all Men give place, that the *Jeruſalem-ſinner* may come to *Jeſus Chriſt* for Mercy.

Fourthly, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners? *Then come thou Profane Wretch, and let me a little enter an argument with thee*; Why wilt thou not come to Jeſus Chriſt, ſince thou art a *Jeruſalem-ſinner?* How canſt thou find in thy heart to ſet thy ſelf againſt Grace, againſt ſuch Grace as offereth Mercy to thee? What Spirit poſſeſſeth thee, and holds thee back from a ſincere cloſure with thy Saviour? Behold God groaningly complains of thee, ſaying, *But Iſrael would none of me. When I called, none did anſwer.* Pſal. 81. 11. Iſa. 66 4.

Shall God enter this Complaint againſt thee? Why doſt thou put him off? why doſt thou ſtop thine ear? Canſt thou defend thy ſelf? When thou art called to an account for thy neglects of ſo great Salvation, what canſt thou anſwer? Or doeſt

doest thou think thou shalt escape the Judgment? *Heb.* 2. 3.

No more *such* Christs! There will be no more such Christs, sinner! Oh! put not the day, the day of Grace, away from thee! If it be once gone, 'twill never come again, Sinner.

But what is it that has got thy Heart, and that keeps it from thy Saviour? *Who in the Heavens can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the Sons of the Mighty can be likened unto the Lord?* Psal. 89. 6. Hast thou, thinkest thou, found any thing so good as Jesus Christ? Is there any among thy Sins, thy Companions, and foolish Delights, that like *Christ*, can help thee in the day of thy distress? Behold, the greatness of thy sins cannot hinder; let not the stubbornness of thy Heart hinder thee, Sinner.

Objection, *But I am ashamed.*

Answer, Oh! don't be ashamed to be saved, Sinner.

Object. *But my old Companions will mock me.*

Ans. Oh! don't be mocked out of Eternal Life, Sinner.

Thy stubbornness affects, afflicts the Heart of thy Saviour. Carest thou not for this? Of old, *He beheld the City,*

and wept over it. Canſt thou hear this, and not be concerned? *Luk.* 19. 41, 42. Shall Chriſt weep to ſee thy Soul going on to deſtruction, and wilt thou ſport thy ſelf in *That* way? Yea, ſhall Chriſt, that can be eternally Happy without thee, be more afflicted at the thoughts of the loſs of thy Soul, than thy ſelf, who art certainly eternally miſerable if thou neglecteſt to come to him?

Thoſe things that keep thee and thy Saviour, on thy part, aſunder, are but Bubbles; the leaſt prick of an affliction, will let out, as to thee, what now thou thinkeſt is worth the venture of Heaven to enjoy.

Haſt thou not *Reaſon?* Canſt thou not ſo much as once ſoberly think of thy dying hour? or of, whether thy ſinful life will drive thee then? Haſt thou no *Conſcience?* or having one, is it rocked ſo faſt aſleep by Sin, or made ſo weary with an unſucceſsful calling upon thee, that it is laid down, and cares for thee no more? Poor Man, thy ſtate is to be lamented. Haſt no *Judgment?* Art not able to conclude, that to be ſaved, is better than to burn in Hell; and that Eternal Life, with God's favour, is better than a Temporal Life in God's diſpleaſure?

pleaſure? Haſt no affection but what is bruitiſh? what, none at all? No affection for the God that made thee? What, none for his loving Son that has ſhewed his love, and dyed for thee? Is not Heaven worth thy affection? O poor Man! which is ſtrongeſt, think'ſt thou, God or thee? If thou art not able to overcome him, thou art a fool for ſtanding out againſt him; *Matt.* 5.25, 26. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.* He will gripe hard, his Fiſt is ſtronger than a Lions paw; take heed of him, he will be angry if you deſpiſe his Son; and will you ſtand guilty in your Treſpaſſes, when he offereth you his Grace and Favour? *Exod.* 34. 6, 7. *Heb.* 10.29,30,31.

Now we come to the Text, *Beginning at Jeruſalem.* This Text, though it be *now* one of the brighteſt Stars that ſhineth in the Bible, becauſe there is in it, as full, if not the fulleſt offer of Grace that can be imagined, to the Sons of Men; yet to them that ſhall periſh from under *this* Word, even this Text will be to ſuch, *one of the hotteſt Coals in Hell.*

This Text therefore will *ſave* thee, or *ſink* thee; there is no ſhifting of it:

If it saves thee, it will set thee high; if it sinks thee, it will set thee low.

But, I say, Why so unconcerned? Hast no Soul? Or dost think thou mayest lose thy *Soul*, and save thy *self*? Is it not pity, had it otherwise been the Will of God, that ever thou wast made a Man, for that thou settest so little by thy Soul?

Sinner, Take the Invitation; Thou art called upon to come to Christ: Nor art thou called upon but by order from the Son of God, though thou shouldest happen to be one of the biggest sinners: For he has bid us offer *Mercy*, as to all the World in general, so in the first place, *To the Sinners of Jerusalem*; or to the biggest sinners.

Fifthly, Would *Jesus Christ* have Mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggest sinners? *Then this shews how unreasonable a thing it is, for men to despair of Mercy.* For those that presume, I shall say something to them afterward.

I now speak to them that Despair.

There are four sorts of Despair. There is the despair of Devils; There is the despair of Souls in Hell; There is the despair that is grounded upon Mens Defficiency;

ficiency; And there is the deſpair that they are perplexed with that are willing to be ſaved, but are too ſtrongly born down with the burden of their ſins.

The deſpair of Devils, the Damneds deſpair, and that deſpair that a Man has of attaining of Life, becauſe of his own Deficience, are all reaſonable. Why ſhould not Devils and Damned Souls deſpair? Yea, why ſhould not Man deſpair of getting to Heaven by his own abilities? I therefore am concerned only with the fourth ſort of Deſpair, to wit, with *the deſpair of thoſe that would be ſaved, but are too ſtrongly born down with the burden of their ſins.*

I ſay therefore to thee that art thus, *And why deſpair?* Thy deſpair, if it was reaſonable, ſhould flow from thee, becauſe found in the Land that is beyond the Grave; or becauſe thou certainly knoweſt that *Chriſt* will not, or cannot ſave thee.

But for the firſt, thou art yet in the Land of the Living; and for the ſecond, thou haſt ground to believe the quite *contrary*: *Chriſt* is able to ſave to the uttermoſt, them that come to God by him; and if he were not willing, he would not have commanded that Mercy in the *firſt place* ſhould be offered to the

biggeſt

biggeſt ſinners. Beſides, he hath ſaid, *And let him that is athirſt come, and whoſoever will, let him take the Water of Life Freely*; that is, with all my heart. What ground now is here for Deſpair? If thou ſayeſt, *The number and burden of my ſins.* I anſwer, Nay: That is rather a ground for Faith; becauſe ſuch an one above all others, is invited by Chriſt to come unto him, yea, promiſed Reſt and Forgiveneſs if they come, *Matt.* 11. 28 What ground then to deſpair? Verily none at all. Thy deſpair then is a thing unreaſonable, and without footing in the Word.

But I have no experience of God's love, God has given me no comfort, or ground of hope, though I have waited upon him for it many a day.

Thou haſt experience of God's love, for that he has opened thine eyes to ſee thy ſins; and for that he has given thee deſires to be ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt. For by thy ſenſe of Sin thou art made to ſee thy poverty of Spirit, and that has laid thee under a ſure ground to hope that Heaven ſhall be thine hereafter.

Alſo thy deſires to be ſaved by *Chriſt*, has put thee under another Promiſe, ſo there is two to hold thee up in hope, though

though thy present burden be never so heavy, *Matt.* 5. 3, 6. As for what thou sayest, as to God's silence to thee, perhaps he has spoken to thee once or twice already, but thou hast not perceived it, *Job* 33. 14, 15.

However, thou hast *Christ* Crucified, set forth before thine eyes in the Bible, and an invitation to come unto him, though thou be a *Jerusalem-sinner*, tho thou be a biggest Sinner; and so no ground to despair. What if God will be silent to thee, is that ground of despair? Not at all, so long as there is a Promise in the Bible that God will in no wise cast away the coming sinner, and *so* long as he invites the *Jerusalem sinner* to come unto him, *Joh.* 6. 37.

Build not therefore Despair upon these things, they are no sufficient foundation for it, such plenty of Promises being in the Bible; and such a discovery of his Mercy to great Sinners of old, especially since we have withall a Clause in the Commission given to Ministers to Preach, that they should begin with the *Jerusalem-sinners* in their offering of Mercy to the World.

Besides, God says, *They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength, they*

shall

ſhall mount up with wings like Eagles; but perhaps it may be long firſt, *I waited long*, ſaith *David*, *and did ſeek the Lord*, and at length his cry was heard: Wherefore he bids his Soul wait on God, and ſays, for it is good ſo to do before thy Saints, *Pſal.* 40. 1. *Pſal.* 62. 5. *Pſal.* 52. 9.

And what if thou waiteſt upon God all thy days? Is it below thee? And what if God will croſs his Book and blot out the hand-writing that is againſt thee, and not let thee know it as yet? Is it fit to ſay unto God, *Thou art hard hearted?* Deſpair not. Thou haſt no ground to depair, ſo long as thou liveſt in this World. 'Tis a ſin to begin to deſpair before one ſets his foot over the threſhold of Hell-gates. For them that are there, let them *deſpair* and ſpare not; but as for thee, thou haſt no ground to do it. What! Deſpair of Bread, in a Land that is full of Corn! Deſpair of Mercy when our God is full of Mercy! Deſpair of Mercy, when God goes about by his Miniſters, beſeeching of Sinners to be reconciled unto him! 2 *Cor.* 5. 18, 19, 20.

Thou *ſcrupulous* fool, where canſt thou find that God was ever falſe to his Promiſe,

miſe, or that he ever deceived the Soul that ventured it ſelf upon him? He often calls upon Sinners to truſt him, though they walk in darkneſs and have no light, *Iſa.* 50. 10.

They have his Promiſe and Oath for their Salvation, that flee for refuge to the hope ſet before them, *Hebrews* 6. 17, 18.

Deſpair! When we have a God of Mercy, and a Redeeming Chriſt *Alive!* For ſhame forbare: Let them deſpair that dwell where there is no God, and that are confined to thoſe Chambers of Death, which can be reached by no Redemption.

A Living Man deſpair! When he is *chid* for murmuring and complaining! *Lam.* 3. 39. Oh! ſo long as we are where Promiſes *ſwarm*, where Mercy is *proclaimed*, where Grace *reigns*, and where *Jeruſalem-ſinners* are priviledged with the firſt offer of Mercy, *it is a baſe thing to deſpair!*

Deſpair undervalues the Promiſe, undervalues the Invitation, undervalues the proffer of Grace. *Deſpair* undervalues the ability of God the Father, and the redeeming Blood of Chriſt his Son: Oh unreaſonable *Deſpair!*

Deſpair

Deſpair makes Man *God's* Judge; 'tis a Controllir of the Promiſe, a Contradicter of Chriſt in his large offers of Mercy: And one that undertakes to make *Unbelief* the great manager of our Reaſon and Judgment, in determining about what God can and will do for Sinners.

Deſpair! It is the Devils fellow, the Devils maſter; yea, the Chains with which he is captivated and held under darkneſs for ever: And to give way thereto in a Land, in a State and Time that flows with Milk and Honey, is an uncomely thing.

I would ſay to my Soul; O my Soul! *this* is not the place of Deſpair, *this* is not the *time* to deſpair in: As long as mine eyes can find a Promiſe in the Bible; as long as there is the leaſt mention of Grace, as long as there is a moment left me of breath or life in this World; ſo long will I wait and look for Mercy; ſo long will I fight againſt Unbelief and Deſpair.

This is the way to honour God and Chriſt: this is the way to ſet the Crown on the Promiſe; this is the way to welcome the Invitation, and Inviter; and this is the way to thruſt thy ſelf under the

ſhelter

ſhelter and protection of the word of Grace. Never deſpair ſo long as our Text is alive, for that doth ſound it out, *That Mercy by Chriſt is offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinner.*

Deſpair is an unprofitable thing, 'twill make a man weary of *waiting* upon God, 2 *Kings* 6. 33. 'Twill make a man *forſake* God, and *ſeek* his Heaven in the *good things of this world*, Gen. 4. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. 'Twill make a man his *own* tormenter, and flounce and fling *like a wild Bull in a net*, *Iſa.* 51. 20.

Deſpair! It drives a man to the ſtudy of his own ruine, and brings him at laſt to be his own Executioner, 2 *Sam.* 17. 23. *Matt.* 27. 3, 4, 5.

Beſides, I am perſwaded alſo, that Deſpair is the cauſe that there are ſo many that would fain be Atheiſts in the World: For becauſe they have entertained a Conceit that God will never be merciful to them; therefore they labour to perſwade themſelves that there is no God at all, as if their misbelief would kill God, or cauſe him to ceaſe to be. A poor ſhift for an Immortal Soul, for a Soul who liketh not to retain God in its knowledge! If this be the beſt that Deſpair can do, let it go, Man; and betake thy

thy ſelf to Faith, to Prayer, to wait for God, and to hope, in deſpite of ten thouſand doubts. And for thy encouragement, take yet (as an addition to what has already been ſaid) theſe following Scriptures; *The Lord takes pleaſure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy*, Pſal. 147. 11.

Whence note, They *fear not* God, that *hope not* in his mercy. Alſo, God is angry with them that hope not in his Mercy; for he only taketh pleaſure in them that hope. He that believeth, or hath received his Teſtimony, *hath ſet to his Seal that God is true*, Joh. 3. 33. But he that receiveth it not, hath made him a liar, and that is a very unworthy thing, 1 *Joh.* 5. 10, 11. *Let the Wicked forſake his ways, and the Unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly multiply pardons*, Iſa. 55. 7. Perhaps thou art weary of thy ways, but art not weary of thy thoughts; of thy unbelieving and deſpairing thoughts: Now God alſo would have thee caſt away theſe thoughts, as ſuch which he deſerveth not at thy hands, *for he will have mercy upon thee, and he will abundantly pardon.*

O

O fools! and ſlow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have ſpoken, Luk. 24. 25. Mark you here, *ſlowneſs* to believe *is a piece of folly*. Ay! but ſayeſt thou, I do believe *ſome*, I believe what can make againſt me. Ay, but Sinner, *Chriſt Jeſus* here calls thee fool for not believing *All*. Believe *All*, *and deſpair if thou canſt*. He that believes *All*, believes that Text that ſaith, *Chriſt* would have Mercy Preached firſt to the *Jeruſalem-ſinners*. He that believeth *All*, believeth all the Promiſes and Conſolations of the Word; and the Promiſes and Conſolations of the Word, weigh heavier then do all the Curſes and Threatnings of the Law. And Mercy *rejoyceth againſt Judgment*. Wherefore believe *All*, and Mercy will to thy Conſcience, weigh Judgment down, and ſo miniſter Comfort to thy Soul. The Lord take the Yoke from off thy Jaws, ſince he has ſet Meat before thee, *Hoſ.* 11. 4. And help thee to remember that he is pleaſed in the firſt place to offer Mercy to the biggeſt ſinners.

Sixthly, Since *Jeſus Chriſt* would have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners, *Let Souls ſee that they lay right hold thereof*; leſt they, notwithſtanding, indeed come ſhort thereof.

Faith

Faith only knows how to deal with Mercy; wherefore put not in the place thereof *Preſumption*. I have obſerved, that as there are Herbs and Flowers in our Gardens, ſo there are their Counterfeits in the Field; only they are diſtinguiſhed from the other by the Name of *Wild Ones*. Why, there is Faith, and *Wild Faith*; and *Wild Faith* is *this Preſumption?* I call it *Wild Faith*, becauſe God never placed it in his Garden, his Church; 'tis only to be found in the Field, the World. I alſo call it *Wild Faith*, becauſe it only grows up, and is nouriſhed where other *wild notions* abounds. Wherefore take heed of this, and all may be well: For this *preſumptuouſneſs* is a very heinous thing in the eyes of God: *The Soul*, ſaith he, *that ſhall do ought preſumptuouſly (whether born in the Land or a ſtranger) the ſame reproacheth the Lord; And that Soul ſhall be cut off from among his people*, Num. 15 30.

The thoughts of this made *David* tremble, and pray, *That God would hold him back from preſumptuous ſins, and not ſuffer them to have dominion over him*, Pſal. 19. 13.

Now this Preſumption, *Then* put its ſelf in the place of Faith, when it tampereth with the promiſe for Life, while the Soul is a ſtranger to Repentance.

Where-

Wherefore you have in the Text, to prevent doing thus, both *Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins* to be offered to *Jeruſalem*, not Remiſſion without Repentance: For all that repent not ſhall periſh, let them preſume on Grace and the Promiſe while they will, *Luk.* 13. 1, 2, 3.

Preſumption then is that which ſevereth *Faith* and *Repentance*, concluding that the Soul ſhall be ſaved by Grace, though the man was never made ſorry for his ſins, nor the love of the Heart turned therefrom. This is to be *ſelf-willed*, as *Peter* has it. And this is a deſpiſing the Word of the Lord, for that has put Repentance and Faith together, *Mark.* 1. 15. *And becauſe he hath deſpiſed the Word of the Lord, and hath broken the Commandment, that Soul ſhall utterly be cut off: his iniquities ſhall be upon him*, Numb. 15. 31.

Let ſuch therefore look it, who yet are, and abide in their ſins; for ſuch, if they hope, *as they are*, to be ſaved, preſume upon the grace of God. Wherefore Preſumption and not harkening to God's Word, are put together, *Deut.* 17. 12.

Again, *Then* men preſume when they are reſolved to abide in their ſins, and yet

ſins, yet expect to be ſaved by God's grace through *Chriſt*. This is as much as to ſay, God liketh of Sin as well as I do, and careth not how men live, if ſo be they lean upon his Son. Of this ſort are they that build up *Zion* with Blood, and *Jeruſalem* with Iniquity; *That Judge for reward, and Teach for hier, and Divine for mony, and lean upon the Lord*, Mic. 3.10, 11. This is doing things with an *high hand* againſt the Lord our God, and a taking him, as it were, *at the Catch!* This is, as we ſay among men, to ſeek to put a trick upon God, as if he had not ſufficiently fortified his Propoſals of Grace by his holy Word, againſt all *ſuch* kind of fools as theſe. But look to it,

Such will be found at the day of God, not among that great company of *Jeruſalem-ſinners*, that ſhall be ſaved by Grace, but among thoſe that have been the great abuſers of the grace of God in the World. Theſe that ſay, *Let us ſin that Grace may abound, and let us do Evil that Good may come*, their Damnation is juſt. And if ſo, they are a great way off of that Salvation that is by *Jeſus Chriſt* preſented to the *Jeruſalem-ſinners*.

I have therefore theſe things to propound to that *Jeruſalem-ſinner* that would know,

know, if he may be ſo bold to venture himſelf upon this Grace.

Firſt, Doſt thou ſee thy ſins?

Secondly, Art thou weary of them?

Thirdly, Wouldſt thou with all thy heart be ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt? I dare ſay no leſs, I dare ſay no more. But if it be truly thus with thee, how great ſoever thy ſins have been, how bad ſoever thou feeleſt thy heart, how far ſoever thou art from thinking that God has mercy for thee; thou art the Man, the *Jeruſalem-ſinner*, that the Word of God has conquered, and to whom it offereth free Remiſſion of ſins, by the Redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt.

When the Jayler cried out, *Sirs, What muſt I do to be ſaved?* The anſwer was, *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved.* He that ſees his ſins aright, is brought to his wits-end by them, and he that is *ſo*, is willing to part from them, and to be ſaved by the grace of God.

If *this* be thy Caſe, fear not, give no way to Deſpair, thou *preſumeſt not*, if thou believeſt to life everlaſting in Jeſus Chriſt. Yea, Chriſt is prepared for ſuch as thou art.

There-

Therefore take good courage and believe. The design of Satan is to tell the Presumptuous, that their presuming on Mercy *is good*; but to perswade the Believer, that his believing *is impudent bold dealing with God.* I never heard a presumptuous man in my life, say that he was afraid that he presumed; but I have heard many an honest humble Soul say, that they have been afraid that their Faith has been Presumption. Why should Satan molest those whose ways he knows will bring them to him? And who can think that he should be quiet when men take the right course to escape his hellish snares. This therefore is the reason why the truly humbled is opposed, while the Presumptuous goes on by *Wind* and *Tide.* The truly humble, Satan hates, but he laughs to see the foolery of the other.

Does thy hand and heart tremble? Upon thee the Promise smiles; *To this man will I look*, says God, *even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my Word*, Isa. 66. 2.

What therefore I have said of Presumption, concerns not the humble in Spirit at all. I therefore am for gathering up the Stones, and for taking the Stumbling-

bling-blocks out of the way of God's People; and fore-warning of them that they lay the ſtumbling block of their Iniquity before their faces, and that are for preſuming upon God's mercy; and let them look to themſelves, *Ezekiel* 14. 6, 7, 8.

Alſo our Text ſtands firm as ever it did, and our Obſervation is ſtill of force, *That Jeſus Chriſt would have mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners.* So then, let none *Deſpair*, let none *Preſume*; Let none *deſpair* that are ſorry for their ſins, and would be ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt: Let none *Preſume*, that abide in the liking of their ſins, though they ſeem to know the exceeding grace of Chriſt; for tho the door ſtand wide open for the reception of the *Penitent*, yet 'tis faſt enough barr'd and bolted againſt the preſumptuous ſinner. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatſoever a man ſows, that he ſhall reap.* It cannot be that God ſhould be *wheedled* out of his Mercy, or prevailed upon by lips of diſſimulation; *He knows them that truſt in him*, and that ſincerely come to him by Chriſt for mercy, *Nahum* 1. 7.

It is then, not the abundance of ſins committed, but the not coming heartily

to God by Chriſt for Mercy, that ſhuts men out of doors: And though their not coming *heartily* may be ſaid to be *But* a Sin; yet 'tis *Such* a Sin, as cauſeth that all thy other ſins abide upon thee unforgiven.

God complains of this. *They have not cried unto me with their heart; They turned, but not to the moſt High. They turned feignedly*, Jer. 3.10. *Hoſ.* 7.14,16.

Thus doing, his Soul hates; but the Penitent, humble, broken-hearted Sinner, be his Tranſgreſſions red as Scarlet, red like Crimſon, in number as the Sand; though his tranſgreſſions cry to Heaven againſt him for Vengeance, and ſeem there to cry louder than do his Prayers, or Tears, or Groans for Mercy; yet he is ſafe. *To this man God will look*, Iſa. 1. 18. *chap.* 66 2.

Seventhly, Would Jeſus Chriſt have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners? *Then here is ground for thoſe that, as to practice, have Not been ſuch, to come to him for mercy.*

Although there is no Sin little of it ſelf, becauſe it is a contradiction of the Nature and Majeſty of God; yet we muſt admit of diverſe numbers, and alſo of aggravations. *Two* Sins are not ſo many

many as *three*; nor are *three*, that are done in ignorance, ſo big as *one* that is done againſt light, againſt knowledge, and conſcience. Alſo there is the Child in Sin, and the Man in ſin that has his Hairs gray, and his Skin wrinkled for very Age. And we muſt put a difference betwixt theſe Sinners alſo. For can it be, that a Child of ſeven, or ten, or ſixteen years old, ſhould be *ſuch* a Sinner, a Sinner ſo vile in the eye of the Law, as he is who has walked according to the courſe of this World, forty, fifty, ſixty, or ſeventy Years? Now the Youth, this Stripling, though he is a Sinner, is but a little ſinner, when compared with ſuch.

Now I ſay, If there be room for the firſt ſort, for thoſe of the *biggeſt* ſize; certainly there is room for the *leſſer* ſize? If there be a Door wide enough for a Gyant to go in at, there is certainly room for a Dwarff. If Chriſt Jeſus has Grace enough to ſave great ſinners, he has ſurely Grace enough to ſave little ones. If he can forgive *five hundred pence*, for certain *he can forgive fifty*, Luk. 7. 41, 42.

But you ſaid before, that the little ſinners muſt ſtand by, until the great ones have

received their grace, and that's diſcouraging!

I anſwer, There are two ſorts of little Sinners, ſuch as *are* ſo, ſuch as *feign* themſelves ſo. There are thoſe that feign themſelves ſo, *them I intended there*, and not thoſe that are indeed comparatively ſo. Such as feign themſelves ſo, may wait long enough before they obtain Forgiveneſs.

But again, A Sinner may be comparatively a little ſinner, and ſenſibly a great one. There is then *two ſorts of greatneſs in ſin*; greatneſs by reaſon of number, greatneſs by reaſon of throughneſs of conviction of the horrible nature of Sin. In this laſt ſenſe, *he that has but one ſin*, if ſuch a one could be found, may in his own eyes find himſelf the biggeſt ſinner in the world. Let this Man, or this Child, therefore put himſelf among the great ſinners, and plead with God as great ſinners do, and expect to be ſaved with the great ſinners, and as ſoon, and as heartily as they.

Yea, a little ſinner, that comparatively is truly ſo, if he ſhall graciouſly give way to Conviction, and ſhall in God's light, diligently weigh the horrible nature of his own ſins, may yet ſooner obtain

tain Forgiveneſs for them at the hands of the heavenly Father, than he that has ten times his ſins, and ſo cauſe to cry ten times harder to God for mercy.

For the *grievouſneſs* of the Cry is a great thing with God; for if he will hear the Widdow, if ſhe cries *at all*, how much more if ſhe cries *moſt grievouſly?* Exod. 22.22,23.

It is not the number, but the true ſenſe of the abominable nature of Sin, that makes the Cry for Pardon lamentable. He, as I ſaid, that has many ſins, may not cry ſo loud in the ears of God, as he that has far fewer; he in our *preſent* ſenſe, that is in his own eyes the biggeſt ſinner, is he that ſooneſt findeth mercy.

The offer Then is to the Biggeſt ſinner, to the biggeſt ſinner Firſt, and the mercy is firſt obtained by him that firſt confeſſeth himſelf to be ſuch an one.

There are men that ſtrive at the throne of Grace for Mercy, by pleading the greatneſs of their Neceſſity. Now their Plea, as to the prevalency of it, lieth not in their counting up of the *number*, but in the ſenſe of the *greatneſs* of their ſins, and in the vehemency of their cry for Pardon. And it is obſervable, that though the birth-right was *Rubens*, and

for his foolishness, given to the Sons of *Joseph*; yet *Judah* prevailed above his Brethren, and of him came the *Messias*, 1 Chron. 5. 1, 2.

There is a heavenly subtilty to be managed in this matter. *Thy Brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.* The blessing belonged to *Esau*, but *Jacob* by his diligence made it his own, *Gen.* 27. 35. The offer is to the biggest sinner, to the biggest sinner first, but if he forbears to cry, the sinner that is a sinner less by far than he, both as to number and the nature of transgression, may get the blessing first, if he shall have grace to bestir himself well; for the loudest cry is heard furthest, and tho most lamentable, pierces sooneſt.

I therefore urge this Head, not because I would have little sinners go and tell God that they are little sinners, thereby to think to obtain his Mercy; for verily, so they are never like to have it: For such words declare, that such a one hath no true sense at all of the nature of his sins.

Sin, as I said, in the nature of it, is horrible; though it be but one single sin as to act; yea, though it be but a sinful thought;

thought; and ſo worthily calls for the damnation of the Soul.

The Compariſon then, of a little and great Sinner, is to go for good ſenſe among men: But to plead the fewneſs of thy ſins, or the comparative harmleſneſs of their quantity before God, argueth no ſound knowledge of the nature of thy Sin, and ſo no true ſenſe of the nature or need of Mercy.

Little Sinner, when therefore thou goeſt to God, though thou knoweſt in thy Conſcience, that thou, as to acts, art no Thief, no Murderer, no Whore, no Liar, no falſe Swearer, or the like, and in reaſon muſt needs underſtand, that *thus* thou art not ſo profanely vile as others; yet when thou goeſt to God for Mercy, know no mans ſins but thine own, make mention of no mans ſins but thine own. Alſo labour not to leſſen thy own, but magnifie and greaten them by all juſt Circumſtances, and be as if there was never a Sinner in the world but thy ſelf. Alſo cry out as if thou waſt the only undone Man; and that is the way to obtain God's mercy.

It is one of the comlieſt Sights in the world, to ſee a little Sinner commenting upon the greatneſs of his ſins; multiply-

ing, and multiplying them to himself, till he makes them in his own eyes *bigger* and *higher* than he seeth any other mans sins to be in the World; and as base a thing it is to see a man do otherwise, and as basely will come on't, *Luk.* 18.10, 11, 12, 13.

As therefore I said to the great Sinner before, let him take heed *lest he presumes*: I say now to the little Sinner, let him take heed *that he don't dissemble*: For there is as great an aptness in the little Sinner to dissemble, as there is in the great one. *He that hideth his sins shall not prosper*, be he a sinner little or great, *Prov.* 28.13.

Eighthly, Would *Jesus Christ* have Mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners? *Then this shews the true cause, why Satan makes such head as he doth against him.*

The *Father* and the *holy* Spirit are well *spoken* of by all Deluders and deceived Persons; *Christ* only is the Rock of Offence. *Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling Stone and a Rock of Offence*, Rom. 9.33. Not that Satan careth for the Father or the Spirit more than he careth for the Son, but he can let men alone with their notions

notions of the Father and the Spirit, for he knows they ſhall never enjoy the Father or the Spirit, if indeed they receive not the Merits of the Son. *He that hath the Son, hath Life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not Life*, however they may boaſt themſelves of the Father and the Spirit, 1 *Joh.* 5. 12. Again, *Whoſoever tranſgreſſeth, and abideth not in the Doctrine of Chriſt, hath not God: He that abideth in the Doctrine of Chriſt, hath both the Father and the Son*, 2 *Joh.* 9.

Chriſt, and Chriſt only is he that can make us capable to enjoy God with Life and Joy to all eternity. Hence he calls himſelf *The Way to the Father*; *The true and living Way*, Joh. 14. 6. Heb. 10. 19, 20. For we cannot come to the Father *but by him*. Satan *knows* this, therefore he hates him. Deluded Perſons are *ignorant* of this, and therefore they are ſo led up and down by Satan by the noſe, as they are.

There are many things by which Satan has taken occaſion to greaten his rage againſt *Jeſus Chriſt*.

As firſt, His love to Man, and then the many *expreſſions* of *that* love. He hath taken Man's nature upon him; he hath in that nature fulfilled the Law to

bring in Righteouſneſs for Man; and hath ſpilt his Blood for the reconciling of Man to God; he hath broke the neck of Death, put away Sin, deſtroyed the works of the Devil, and got into his own hands the Keys of Death: and all theſe are heinous things to Satan. He cannot abide Chriſt for this. Beſides, he hath eternal Life in himſelf, and that to beſtow upon us; and we in all likelihood are to poſſeſs *the very places*, from which the *Satans* by tranſgreſſion fell, if not places more glorious. Wherefore he muſt needs be angry. And is it not a vexatious thing to him, that we ſhould be admitted to the Throne of Grace by Chriſt, while he ſtands bound over in Chains of Darkneſs, to anſwer for his Rebellions againſt God and his Son, at the terrible day of Judgment. Yea, we poor Duſt and Aſhes muſt become his Judges, and triumph over him for ever; and all this long of *Jeſus Chriſt*; for he is the Meritorious Cauſe of all this.

Now though Satan ſeeks to be revenged for this, yet he knows it is in vain to attack the Perſon of Chriſt, he has overcome him; therefore he tampers with a company of ſilly Men, that he may Villifie him by them. And they, bold fools

as

as they are, will not ſpare to ſpit in his face. They will rail at his Paſſion, *and deny the very Being of it*; they will rail at his Blood, *and deny the Merit and Worth of it.* They will deny the very end, why he accompliſhed the Law, and by jiggs, and tricks, and quirks, which he helpeth them to, they ſet up fond Names and Images in his place, and give the glory of a *Saviour* to them. Thus Satan worketh under the Name of *Chriſt*; and his Miniſters, under the name of the Miniſters of Righteouſneſs.

And by his Wiles and Stratagems he undoes a world of men; But there is a Seed, and they ſhall ſerve him, and it ſhall be counted to the Lord for a Generation. Theſe ſhall ſee their ſins, and that Chriſt is the Way to Happineſs. Theſe ſhall venture themſelves both Body and Soul upon his Worthineſs.

All this Satan knows, and therefore his rage is kindled the more. Wherefore according to his ability and allowance, he aſſaulteth, tempteth, abuſeth, and ſtirs up what he can to be hurtful to theſe poor People, that he may, while his time ſhall laſt, make it as hard and difficult for them to go to eternal Glory as he can. Often-times he abuſ s them

with

with wrong apprehenſions of God, and with wrong apprehenſions of Chriſt. He alſo caſts them into the Mire, to the reproach of Religion, the ſhame of their Brethren, the deriſion of the World, and diſhonour of God. He holds our hands while the World buffets us; he puts Bear-skins upon us, and then ſets the Dogs at us. He bedawbeth us with his own Fome, and then tempts us to believe that that bedawbing comes from our ſelves.

Oh! the rage and the roaring of this Lion! and the hatred that he manifeſts againſt the Lord *Jeſus*, and againſt them that are purchaſed with his Blood! But yet in the midſt of all this, the Lord *Jeſus* ſends forth his Herralds to proclaim in the Nations, his love to the World; and to invite them to come in to him for Life: Yea, his Invitation is ſo large, that it offereth his Mercy in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners of every Age, which augments the Devils rage the more.

Wherefore, as I ſaid before, fret he, fume he, the Lord *Jeſus will divide the Spoil with this great one; yea, he ſhall divide the Spoil with the ſtrong, becauſe he hath poured out his Soul unto death, and*

was

was numbred with the Transgressors, and bare the sin of many, and made Intercession for the transgressors, Isa. 53. 12.

Ninthly, Would *Jesus Christ* have Mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners? *Let the Tempted harp upon This string for their help and consolation.* The Tempted wherever he dwells, always thinks himself the biggest Sinner, one most unworthy of eternal Life.

This is Satans master Argument; Thou art a horrible Sinner, a Hypocrite, one that has a profane heart, and one that is an utter stranger to a work of Grace. I say, this is his *Maul*, his *Club*, his Master-piece, He doth with this as some do by their *most inchanting* Songs, sings them every where. I believe there are but few Saints in the World that have not had this temptation sounding in their ears. But were they but aware, Satan by all this, does but drive them to the Gap out at which they should go, and so escape his roaring.

Saith he, Thou art a great Sinner, a a horrible Sinner, a profane hearted Wretch, one that cannot be matcht for a Vile one in the Countrey.

And

And all this while *Christ* says to his Ministers, Offer Mercy in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners. So that this Temptation drives thee directly into the Arms of *Jesus Christ*.

Was therefore the Tempted but aware, he might say, Ay, Satan, so I am, I am a Sinner of the biggest size, and therefore have most need of *Jesus Christ*. Yea, *because* I am such a wretch, therefore *Jesus Christ* calls me; yea, he calls me first: The first proffer of the Gospel is to be made to the *Jerusalem-sinner*: I am he, wherefore stand back Satan, make a *lane*, my right is first to come to Jesus Christ.

This now would be *like* for *like*. This would foil the Devil: This would make him say, I must not deal with this man thus; for then I put a Sword into his hand to cut off my head.

And this is the meaning of *Peter*, when he saith, *Resist him stedfast in the Faith*, 1 *Pet.* 5. 9. And of *Paul*, when he saith, Take the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the Wicked, *Ephes.* 6. 16.

Wherefore is it said, *Begin at Jerusalem*, if the *Jerusalem-sinner* is not to have the benefit of it? And if I am to

have

have the benefit of it, let me call it to mind when Satan haunts me with the continual remembrance of my ſins, of my *Jeruſalem-ſins*. Satan and my Conſcience ſays, I am the biggeſt ſinner, *Chriſt* offereth Mercy in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners. Nor is the manner of the Offer other but ſuch as ſuiteth with my mind: I am ſorry for my ſin; yea, ſorry at my heart that ever ſinful Thought did enter, or find the leaſt entertainment in my wicked mind: And might I obtain my Wiſh, I would never more that my heart ſhould be a place for ought but the Grace, and Spirit, and Faith of the Lord *Jeſus*.

I ſpeak not this to leſſen my Wickedneſs; I would not for all the World, but be placed by mine own Conſcience in the very *front* of the biggeſt Sinners, that I might be one of the firſt that are beckoned by the gracious Hand of *Jeſus* the *Saviour*, to come to him for Mercy.

Well Sinner, thou now ſpeakeſt like a Chriſtian, but ſay thus in a *ſtrong Spirit* in the hour of Temptation, and then thou wilt, to thy commendation and comfort, quit thy ſelf well.

This improving of *Chriſt* in dark hours, is the Life, though the hardeſt part

part of our Chriſtianity. We ſhould neither ſtop at Darkneſs, nor at the raging of our luſts, but go on in a way of venturing and caſting the whole of our Affair for the next World, at the foot of *Jeſus Chriſt*. This is the way to make the Darkneſs *light*, and alſo to *alay* the *raging* of our Corruption.

The firſt time the *Paſſover* was eaten, *was in the night*; and when *Iſrael* took Courage to go forward, though the Sea ſtood in their way like a devouring Gulf, and the Hoſt of the *Ægyptians* follow them at the heels; yet the Sea gives place, and their Enemies were as ſtill as a ſtone till they was gone over, *Exod.* 12. 8. *Chap.* 14. 13, 14, 21, 22. *Chap.* 15, 16.

There is nothing like Faith to help at a pinch; Faith diſſolves Doubts, as the Sun drives away the Miſt. And that you may not be put out, know your time, as I ſaid, of believing is always. There are times when ſome Graces may be out of uſe, but there is *no* time wherein Faith can be ſaid to be ſo. Wherefore Faith muſt be always in exerciſe.

Faith is the *eye*, is the *mouth*, is the *hand*, and one of theſe is of uſe all day long. *Faith* is to *ſee*, to *receive*, to *work*, or to

to *eat*; and a Chriſtian ſhould be ſeeing or receiving, or working, or feeding all day long. Let it rain, let it blow, let it thunder, let it lighten, a Chriſtian muſt ſtill believe: *At what time*, ſaid the Good man, *I am afraid, I will truſt in thee*, Pſal. 56. 2, 3.

Nor can we have a better encouragement to do this, than is by the Text ſet before us, even an open heart for a *Jeruſalem-ſinner*. And if for a *Jeruſalem-ſinner to* come, then for ſuch an one, *when* come. If ſuch a one *To Be* ſaved, then for ſuch a one that *Is* ſaved. If for ſuch a one *To* be pardoned his great tranſgreſſions, then for ſuch a one who *Is* pardoned theſe, to come daily to *Jeſus Chriſt* too, to be cleanſed and ſet free from his common Infirmities, and from the Iniquities of his holy things.

Therefore let the poor Sinner that would be ſaved, labour for skill to make the beſt Improvement of the grace of Chriſt to help him againſt the temptations of the Devil and his Sins.

Tenthly, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners? *Let thoſe men conſider this, that* (have, or) *may in a day of trial*

trial have ſpoken or done wi[illegible] Pro-feſſion or Conſcience told them they ſhould not, and that have the guilt and burden thereof upon their Conſciences.

Whether a thing be wrong or right, Guilt may purſue him that doth contrary to his Conſcience. But ſuppoſe a man ſhould deny his God, or his Chriſt, or relinquiſh a good Profeſſion, and be under the real guilt thereof? Shall he therefore conclude he is gone for ever? Let him come again with *Peter*'s tears, and no doubt but he ſhall obtain *Peter*'s Forgiveneſs. For the Text *includes the biggeſt ſinners.*

And 'tis obſervable, That *before this Clauſe* was put into this Commiſſion, *Peter* was pardoned his horrible Revolt from his Maſter. He that Revolteth in the day of Trial, if he is not ſhot quite dead upon the place, but is ſenſible of his Wound, and calls out for a *Chyrurgion*, ſhall find his Lord at hand to pour Wine and Oyl into his Wounds, that he may again be healed. And to incourage him to think that there may be Mercy for him: Beſides what we find Recorded of *Peter*, you read in the *Acts*, ſome was through the violence of their Trials, compelled to Blaſpheme, and yet

yet are called Saints, *Acts* 26. 9, 10, 11.

Hence you have a Promiſe or two that ſpeaks concerning ſuch kind of Men, to incourage us to think that at leaſt ſome of them ſhall come back to the Lord their God. *Shall they fall*, ſaith he, *and not ariſe? Shall they turn away, and not return?* Jer. 8. 4. *And in that day I will aſſemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that was driven out, and her that I have afflicted. And I will make her that halteth a Remnant, and her that was caſt off, a ſtrong Nation; And the Lord ſhall reign over them in Mount Zion for ever.* What we are to underſtand by her that halteth, is beſt expreſſed by the Prophet *Elijah*, *Mic.* 4. 6, 7. *Zeph.* 3. 19. 1 *Kings* 18. 21.

I will conclude then, that for them that *have* halted, or *may* halt, the Lord has Mercy in the Bank, and is willing to accept them if they return to him again.

Perhaps they may never be after that of any great eſteem in the Houſe of God, but if the Lord will admit them to favour and forgiveneſs: O exceeding and undeſerved Mercy! See *Ezek.* 44. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

Thou

Thou then that mayeſt be the Man, Remember this, that there is Mercy alſo for thee. Return therefore to God, and to his Son, who hath yet in ſtore for thee, and who will do thee good.

But perhaps thou wilt ſay, He doth not ſave all Revolters, and therefore perhaps not me.

Anſwer, Art thou returning to God? If thou art returning, thou art the Man. *Return ye backſliding Children, and I will heal your backſlidings*, Jer. 3. 22.

Some, as I ſaid, that Revolt, are ſhot dead upon the place, and for them, who can help them? But for them that cry out of their Wounds, 'tis a ſign they are yet alive, and if they uſe the means in time, doubtleſs they may be healed.

Chriſt Jeſus has bags of Mercy that was never yet broken up or unſealed. Hence it is ſaid, he has Goodneſs *laid up*; things *reſerved* in Heaven for his. And if he breaks up one of theſe bags, who can tell what he can do!

Hence his Love is ſaid to be ſuch as *paſſeth Knowledge*, and that his Riches are *unſearchable*. He has, *no body* knows what, for *no body* knows who! He has by him in ſtore for ſuch as ſeem in the view of all men, to be gone beyond recovery.

covery. For this the Text is plain: What Man or Angel could have thought that the *Jeruſalem-ſinners* had been yet on this ſide of an impoſſibility of enjoying Life and Mercy? Hadſt thou ſeen their actions, and what horrible things they did to the Son of God: Yea, how ſtoutly they backed what they did, with reſolves and endeavours to perſevere, when they had killed his Perſon, againſt his Name and Doctrine: And that there was not found among them all that while, as we read of, the leaſt remorſe or regret for theſe their doings: Couldſt thou have imagined that Mercy would ever have took hold of them, at leaſt ſo ſoon! Nay, that they ſhould, of all the World, be counted thoſe *Only* meet to have it offered to them in the *very firſt place!* For ſo my Text commands, ſaying, *Preach Repentance and Remiſſion of Sin among all Nations, Beginning at Jeruſalem.*

I tell you the thing is a Wonder, and muſt for ever ſtand for a Wonder among the Sons of Men. It ſtands alſo for an everlaſting Invitation and Allurement to the biggeſt Sinners to come to *Chriſt* for Mercy.

Now

Now ſince, in the Opinion of all Men, the Revolter is ſuch a one; if he has, as I ſaid before, any Life in him, let him take incouragement to come again, that he may live by Chriſt.

Eleventhly, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners? *Then let God's Miniſters tell them ſo.* There is an Incidence in us, I know not how it doth come about, when we are Converted, to contemn them that are left behind. Poor fools as we are, we forget that we our ſelves were ſo, *Tit.* 3. 2,3.

But would it not become us better, ſince we have taſted that the Lord is gracious, to carry it towards them ſo, that we may give them Convincing ground to believe, that we have found that Mercy which alſo ſets open the Door for them to come and partake with us.

Miniſters, I ſay, ſhould do thus, both by their Doctrine, and in all other reſpects.

Auſterity doth not become us, neither in Doctrine nor in Converſation: We our ſelves live by Grace; Let us give as we receive, and labour to perſwade our fellow-ſinners which God has left behind

hind us, to follow after, that they may partake with us of Grace. We are saved by Grace, let us live like them that are *gracious*. Let all our things (to the World) be done in Charity towards them, Pity them, Pray for them, be familiar with them for their good. Let us lay aside our fooliſh, worldly, carnal *grandure*; Let us not walk the Streets, and have ſuch behaviours as ſignifie we are ſcarce for touching of the poor ones that are left behind, no not with a pair of *Tongs*. It becomes not Miniſters thus to do.

Remember your Lord, he was familiar with Publicans and Sinners to a Proverb. *Behold a gluttonous man, and a Wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and Sinners*, Matt. 11. 19. The firſt part, concerning his gluttonous eating and drinking, to be ſure was an horrible ſlander; but for the other, *nothing was ever ſpoke truer of him by the World.* Now, why ſhould we lay hands croſs on this Text, that is, chooſe good Victuals, and love the ſweet Wine better than the Salvation of the poor Publican? Why not familiar with ſinners, provided we hate their ſpots and Blemiſhes, and ſeek that they may be healed of them?

Why

Why not fellowly with our Carnal Neighbours? If we do take occaſion to do ſo, that we may drop, and be yet diſtilling ſome good Doctrine upon their Souls? Why not go to the poor Man's Houſe, and give him a *Penny*, and a Scripture to think upon? Why not ſend for the Poor to fetch away, at leaſt, the Fragments of thy Table, that the Bowels of thy fellow-ſinner may be refreſht as well as thine?

Miniſters ſhould be Exemplary: But I am an inferiour Man, and muſt take heed of too much medling. But might I, I would meddle with them, with their Wives, and with their Children too. I mean not this of all, but of them that deſerve it, though I may not name them.

But, I ſay, let Miniſters follow the ſteps of their bleſſed Lord, who by Word and Deeds ſhewed his Love to the Salvation of the World, in ſuch a carriage as declared him to prefer their Salvation before his own private Concern. For we are commanded to follow his ſteps, *who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*

And as I have ſaid concerning Miniſters, ſo I ſay to all the Brethren, carry

it

it ſo, that all the World may ſee, that indeed you are the Sons of Love.

Love your Saviour; Yea, ſhew one to another that you love him, not only by a ſeeming love of Affection, but with the love of Duty. Practical Love is beſt. Many love *Chriſt* with nothing but the lick of the Tongue. Alas! *Chriſt Jeſus* the Lord, muſt not be put off thus: *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them*, ſaith he, *he it is that loveth me*, Joh. 14. 21.

Practical Love, which ſtands in Self-denial, in Charity to my Neighbour, and a patient enduring of Affliction for his Name: This is counted Love.

Right Love to *Chriſt*, is that which carries in it a provoking Argument to others of the Brethren, *Heb.* 10. 24.

Should a Man ask me how he ſhould know that he loveth the Children of God? The beſt anſwer I could give him, would be in the Words of the Apoſtle *John*. *By this*, ſaith he, *we know we love the Children of God, when we love God, and keep his Commandments*, 1 *Joh.* 5. 2.

Love to God and Chriſt, is *then* ſhewn, when we are tender of his Name; and then we ſhew our ſelves tender of

his Name, when we are afraid to break any the leaſt of his Commandments. And when we are here, then do we ſhew our love to our Brother alſo.

Now we have Obligation ſufficient thus to do, for that our Lord loved us, and gave himſelf for us, to deliver us from Death, that we might live through him.

The World, when they hear the Doctrine that I have aſſerted and handled in this little Book, to wit, That *Jeſus Chriſt* would have Mercy offered in the *firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners*; will be apt, becauſe themſelves are Unbelievers, to think that this is a Doctrine that leads to Looſneſs, and that gives liberty to the Fleſh; but if you that Believe, love your Brethren, and your Neighbours truly, and as you ſhould, you will put to ſilence the ignorance of ſuch fooliſh Men, and ſtop their mouths from ſpeaking Evil of you.

And, I ſay, let the love of *Chriſt* conſtrain us to this. Who deſerveth our Heart, our Mouth, our Life, our Goods, ſo much as *Jeſus Chriſt*, who has bought us to himſelf by his Blood, to this very end, that we ſhould *be a peculiar People, zealous of good Works?*

There

There is nothing more ſeemly in the world, than to ſee a Chriſtian walk as becomes the Goſpel; nor any thing more unbecoming a Reaſonable Creature, than to hear a man ſay, *I believe in Chriſt*, and yet ſee in his Life, Debauchery and Profaneneſs. Might I, ſuch men ſhould be counted the baſeſt of men; ſuch men ſhould be counted by all, unworthy of the Name of *Chriſtian*, and ſhould be ſhunned by every good man, as ſuch who are the very Plague of Profeſſion.

For ſo it is written, *We ſhould carry it towards them. Whoſo has a Form of Godlineſs, and deny the power thereof, from ſuch we muſt turn away.*

It has oft-times come into my mind, to ask, by what means it is, That the Goſpel Profeſſion ſhould be ſo Taunted with Looſe and Carnal Goſpellers? And I could never arrive to better Satisfaction in the matter, than this, Such men are made Profeſſors by the Devil, and ſo by him put among the reſt of the Godly. A certain Man had a fruitleſs Figg-Tree planted in his Vineyard; but by who was it planted there? Even by him that ſowed the Tares, his own Children, among the Wheat, *Luke* 13. 6. *Matt.*

13.

13. 37, 38, 39, 40. And that was the Devil. But why doth the Devil do thus? Not of love to them, but to make of them Offences and Stumbling blocks to others. For he knows that a looſe Profeſſor in the Church, does more miſchief to Religion, than ten can do to it that are in the World.

Was it not, think you, the Devil that ſtirred up the Damoſel that you read of in *Acts* 16. to cry out, *Theſe are the Servants of the Moſt high God, that ſhew unto us the way of Salvation?* Yes it was, as is evident, *For Paul was grieved to hear it.* But why did the Devil ſtir up her to cry ſo? But becauſe that was the way to blemiſh the Goſpel, and to make the World think that it came from the ſame hand as did her Sooth-ſaying and Witchery, *Ver.* 16, 17, 18. *Holineſs, O Lord, becomes thy Houſe for ever.*

Let therefore, whoever they be that profeſs the Name of *Chriſt*, take heed that they Scandal not that Profeſſion which they make of him, ſince he has ſo graciouſly offered us, as we are Sinners of the biggeſt ſize, in the *firſt place*, his Grace to Save us

FINIS.